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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH
INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE
VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.—RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.
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—REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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THE
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REV. CANON H. D. M. SPENCE, M.A.,

VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRA'S, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

EXODUS.

Exposition and Homiletics

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VOL. I.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. TITLE AND CONTENTS.

THE Hebrew-speaking Jews have always designated the five books of the Pentateuch by their initial word or words; and, as they called the first book *Beréshith*, "In the Beginning," and the third *Vay-yikra*, "And he called," so they denominated the second *Ve-éleh shemóth*, "And these (are) the names." The title "Exodus" was first applied to the book by the Hellenistic, or Greek-speaking, Jews, who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek at Alexandria in the third and second centuries B.C. Exodus (*ἐξόδος*) means "departure" or "outgoing," and was selected as an appropriate name for a work which treats mainly of the departure of the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. The earliest Latin translation of the Old Testament, which was made from the Greek, retained the Greek title untranslated; and hence it passed into the Vulgate of Jerome, and into the languages of modern Europe.

While the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and the mode in which it was brought about, constitute the main subject of the book, and occupy its middle portion (chs. ii.—xviii.), two other subjects are also treated of, which form the prologue and the epilogue of the principal drama. The former of these—the subject-matter of ch. i.—is the increase and growth of the Israelites—their development from a tribe into a nation. The latter, which in spiritual grandeur and importance holds a pre-eminent rank, is the adoption of Israel as God's peculiar people by the Law given and the Covenant entered into at Mount Sinai (chs. xix.—xl.). The contents are thus in part historical, in part legislative. Historically, the book contains the events of 360 years, which is the interval between the death of Joseph and the giving of the Law at Sinai. It embraces the formation of the people by a rapid increase, which may have been partly due to natural causes, but was also in some degree the result of God's blessing resting especially upon them; the alarm of the Egyptian monarch at their growing numbers; his plans for preventing their multiplication and the entire failure

of those plans; the birth and education of Moses; his first unauthorised attempt to deliver his nation from oppression; his flight to the land of Midian, and Divine appointment to be the deliverer of his nation; his communications with the Egyptian king on the subject of the people's release; the ten successive plagues whereby the king's reluctance was ultimately overcome; the institution of the Passover, and the departure of the Israelites; Pharaoh's pursuit; the passage of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian host; the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai; the giving of the Decalogue and the acceptance of the "Book of the Covenant" by the people; the lapse into idolatry and its punishment (ch. xxxii.); the directions given for the construction of the Tabernacle, the freewill offerings made, and the execution of the work by Bezaleel and Aholiab (chs. xxxv.—xl. 33); followed by the Divine occupation of the new construction, and the establishment, in connection with it, of signs whereby the further journeyings of the people were directed (xl. 34—38). In its legislative aspect, the book occupies the unique position of being the very source and origin—*fons et origo*—alike of the moral and of the ceremonial law, containing in the Decalogue an inspired summary of the first principles of pure morality, and in the directions given with respect to the Passover (xii. 1—50) and other feasts (ch. xxiii. 14—17), the redemption of the firstborn (ch. xiii. 11—16), the materials and plan of the Tabernacle (ch. xxv. 10—ch. xxvii.), the vestments of the priests and high-priest (ch. xxviii.), the method of their consecration (ch. xxix.), and other similar matters, asserting and enforcing the necessity of a prescribed course of outward acts and forms for the sustentation of religious life in a community of beings so constituted as men are in this world.

It has been well observed, that "the contents of the Second Book of Moses include an extraordinary variety of matter, and offer to the inquiring mind an unusual extent" of subjects for investigation.¹ The historical sketch of Israel's position in Egypt invites inquiry into the dark and difficult problems of Egyptian history and chronology: the Ten Plagues open up to us the consideration of the natural phenomena of Egypt and the East generally; the journeyings of the Hebrews in Egypt and the Sinaitic peninsula lead the way to various geographical doubts and queries; the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant give occasion for, if they do not necessitate, investigations connected with the sciences of ethics and jurisprudence; lastly, the account of the Tabernacle, the sacred utensils, and the sacerdotal dress and ornaments, involve the consideration of the previous history of art, and the existing state of proficiency in such handicrafts as weaving, embroidery, and metallurgy. Again, the language of Exodus, in common with that of the rest of the Pentateuch, has to some

¹ Kalisch, 'Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament,' Introduction to Exodus, § 1, par. 3.

extent an Egyptian tinge, and involves philological inquiries of considerable difficulty and importance. Altogether the Book is one of extraordinary and diversified interest, and necessitates a number of disquisitions of a more or less abstruse character.

§ 2. DIVISIONS.

It is usual to divide Exodus into two portions only, the first extending from ch. i. to the end of ch. xix., and treating of the circumstances under which the deliverance from Egypt was effected; the second, commencing with ch. xx. and reaching to the end of the book, containing an account of the giving of the Law, and the institutions by which the organisation of the people was completed. But, for the purposes of a comment such as the present, something more than this broad distinction and single line of demarcation is needed. It is not, however, necessary to have recourse to artificial or imaginary *termini*. The Book itself bears a markedly sectional character, which has been accounted for on the supposition that it was composed at different times, and written on separate parchments or papyri, each section being of such a length as suited it for congregational reading.¹ The first and second chapters together form such a section. Its main subject is the oppression of the Israelites by the Egyptians, with which is interwoven an account of the birth of Moses, and the first wholly abortive attempt which he made to right the wrongs of his people and improve their social position. This is followed by a section on the call of Moses, and the Divine commission given to him, whereby he was empowered to take the oversight of his people, to act for them, to plead for them with Pharaoh, and ultimately to lead them out of Egypt; the section terminating with the people's acknowledgment of his mission, and acceptance of him as their chief (ch. iv. 31). The third section is co-extensive with ch. v. It contains the record of Moses' first application to the king of Egypt on behalf of Israel, and of its unhappy result. Section 4 is the sequel to this. It consists of ch. vi. vers. 1 to 27, and tells of the depression of the people in consequence of their increased affliction, the encouragement vouchsafed by God to Moses, and the fresh "charge" given by God to him and Aaron to persist in their efforts and effect the people's release. The next section is a long one. It begins at verse 28 of ch. vi. and continues to the end of ch. xi. The subject is an account of the nine ineffectual plagues, against which Pharaoh "hardened his heart," prefaced by a description of the one miracle wrought as a mere sign to accredit the mission of the brothers, and followed by the announcement of the tenth and last plague, before which even Pharaoh's stubborn will was to bend. Section 6 contains the institution of the Passover, the tenth plague, and the actual hasty departure of the

¹ 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pp. 237--8

Israelites from Rameses, when Pharaoh finally "thrust them out." It consists of the first forty-two verses of ch. xii. Section 7 contains directions with respect to the Passover and the sanctification of the firstborn. It extends from ch. xii. 43 to ch. xiii. 16, and constitutes a document apart, of a purely legal character, which was probably inserted at this point, as the fittest place for it, when the various sections were finally put together by their author. In the next section (ch. xiii. 17—ch. xv.), the historical narrative is resumed, and the march of the Israelites is traced from Succoth to the shores of the Red Sea; their pursuit by the Egyptians is related, together with their miraculous passage across the bed of the sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's host by the return of the waters. Section 9 contains the song of Moses and Miriam, and consists of the first twenty-one verses of ch. xv. In section 10 the further march of the Israelites is traced, and they are conducted from the Red Sea to Sinai, where God proposes to enter into a covenant with them (ch. xv. 22 to the end of ch. xix.). Section 11 contains the Decalogue, together with the "Book of the Covenant," and extends from ch. xx. 1 to ch. xxiii. 33. Section 12 comprises—the acceptance of the covenant; the revelation of God's presence to Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders; together with the ascent of Moses into the cloud that covered the mountain, and his continuance there for forty days (ch. xxiv.). Section 13 contains the directions given by God for the construction of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the altar of burnt-offering, and the court of the Tabernacle; for the sacerdotal garments, and the ceremonial of priestly consecration; for the altar of incense; and for the composition of the incense and of the oil of consecration (ch. xxv.—xxx.). Section 14 contains the appointment of Bezaleel and Aholiab as the artists to execute the required works; the appointment of the Sabbath as a sign; and the delivery to Moses of the two Tables of stone, written with the finger of God. It is coincident with ch. xxxi. Section 15 is purely historical. It gives an account of the terrible sin of the people in setting up the golden calf, and the consequences of this dreadful sin—the breaking of the two Tables, the slaughter of three thousand guilty persons by the Levites, and the threat of the withdrawal of God's presence, which however was revoked at the prayer of Moses (chs. xxxii.—xxxiii.). Section 16 (ch. xxxiv.) is the sequel to section 15. It records the renewal of the two Tables of stone, and the descent of Moses from Sinai with them in his hand, and with a glory on his face that the people could not bear to look on, whence the necessity of his veiling himself. The remaining section (chs. xxxv.—xl.) contains the historical account of the construction of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the altars of incense and burnt-offering, the priests' dresses, etc., the setting of all things in their places, and the sanctification of the whole by the visible entrance of the Shechinah into the sacred dwelling-place.

§ 3. UNITY OF THE WORK.

Much the same arguments have been employed to disprove the unity of Exodus, and to establish the theory that it is the work of at least two authors, as have been already examined in this COMMENTARY with respect to Genesis. "The Elohist" and "the Jehovist" are again paraded before us, as if they were admitted realities, instead of being, as they are, pure figments, the creations of a captious and over-refining pseudo-criticism. There is the same want of agreement among the various advocates of the theory, which has been already noticed in the comment on Genesis, as to which passages are the work of the Elohist, and which of the Jehovist, whole chapters being assigned to one of them by some critics, and by others to the other.¹ Moreover, curiously enough, in their application to Exodus, the very *raison d'être* of the names disappears, passages being ascribed to the Jehovist in which the only name of God is *Elohim*, and others to the Elohist in which the only name used is *Jehovah*.² Under these circumstances it would only be reasonable that the terms Elohist and Jehovist should be relinquished, and the confession made that the theory on which they are based has broken down; but "the higher criticism," as it delights to call itself, seems not greatly to affect the virtue of candour. The real question now raised with regard to Exodus is not whether it can be divided into two sets of passages, Elohistio and Jehovistic respectively, in the former of which may be recognised the original document, while the latter are the work of an editor, supplementer, or compiler; but whether any division at all can be made, whether there are any clear traces of a second hand, or whether the "book" has not, in its structure, style, and method such clear and unmistakable marks of unity as to point distinctly to a single author.³

Now the book has one clear and plain purpose, which is to give an account of the circumstances under which the Israelites quitted Egypt, and became God's peculiar people, bound to him by a covenant, and granted his continuous presence with them to guide and direct them. The narrative flows on without a break. If there are some chronological gaps in the earlier portion,⁴ they are necessitated by the fact that nothing occurred

¹ As ch. xx., which is assigned to the Elohist by De Wette, Stähelin, and Von Lengerke, but to the Jehovist by Knobel ('Exegetisches Handbuch,' vol. ii. p. xvii.).

² E.g. Ex. i. 15—22 is assigned to the Jehovist by Knobel, De Wette, Von Lengerke, and others, though God appears as *Elohim* in vers. 17, 20 and 21, and the name *Jehovah* does not appear at all. Similarly chs. xxv.—xxviii. are ascribed to the Elohist, though *Jehovah* occurs in them five times, and *Elohim* not at all. Less extreme cases are those of ch. iii. and chs. xxx.—xxxi., both called Elohistio; though in the former *Jehovah* occurs twenty times, and *Elohim* seven only; in the latter, *Jehovah* occurs fifteen times, and *Elohim* only twice.

³ Against the disintegrating views of so many German critics may well be set the conviction of Kalisch:—"We see the completest harmony in all parts of Exodus; we consider it as a perfect whole: pervaded throughout by one spirit and the same leading ideas." ('Hist. and Crit. Commentary,' p. x. E. T.)

⁴ As between the death of Joseph (ch. i. 6) and the accession of the "new king, which knew not Joseph" (ch. 8); between the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter (ch. ii. 5—10) and

during the omitted periods which either advanced or hindered the action which it is the writer's business to relate. He is not a secular historian, bent on recording all the circumstances in the early life of his nation, but a sacred writer, a religious teacher, bound to confine his attention to their *theocratic* history, or in other words to God's providential dealings with them. These consist for some centuries in two things only—the rapid increase of the race, despite all attempts to hinder it; and the severe oppression to which after a time they were subjected. The former is important as giving them the strength to do what they did; the latter as supplying the motive. So these two things are put on record; but their life before the oppression began, and even the time that the oppression lasted, which an ordinary historian would of course have noted, are omitted as unimportant for the theocratic history. Similarly, with regard to Moses, the leader of the Exodus, while those circumstances which prepared him for his task—his education at the court, which gave him ready access to Pharaoh, and his sojourn in Midian, which made him familiar with life in the desert—are clearly marked; all the details of his early career, covering a space (according to St. Stephen, Acts vii. 23) of “full forty years,” and all but the barest outline of his life in Midian, occupying another similar term, are suppressed, as not helping on the people's deliverance, or conducing to their reception into covenant. But, from the time that the deliverance begins, i.e. from the date of Moses' call, there are no gaps, no omissions—every step of the history is traced with the utmost minuteness, because each furthers the great ends which the writer has in view—first, the people's deliverance—then, their acceptance into covenant at Sinai—finally, the completion of the covenant on God's part by the visible location of the Shechinah in the Tabernacle.

And as there is this unity of historical aim in the whole of Exodus, so is there a great unity of style. Historical narrative indeed, and the details of legislation and construction, being subjects exceedingly diverse, cannot well be treated in the same way; and it would be fanciful to maintain, that either “the Book of the Covenant” or the description of the Tabernacle is manifestly from the same hand as the account of the oppression of Israel or of the plagues; but wherever in the later chapters a narrative passage occurs (e.g. chs. xxiv.; xxxii.—xxxiv. 8; xxxiv. 28—35; xl. 16—38), the resemblances to the style of the earlier portion of the book (chs. i.—xix.) are numerous and striking;¹ and similarly, wherever in the early portion

his “going out unto his brethren” (ib. 11); and between the birth of Gershom (ib. 22) and the miracle of the burning bush (ch. iii. 2).

¹ It would be tedious to exhibit this agreement, and it seems to be unnecessary. No arguments of any weight have been adduced by the opponents of the unity, based upon style. When Stähelin says, “Wherever I find mention of a ‘pillar of fire,’ or of a ‘cloud,’ or an ‘angel of Jehovah,’ or the phrase ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ . . . when mention is made of a ‘coming down of God,’ or when the Canaanite nations are numbered, or the Tabernacle supposed to be without the camp, I feel tolerably certain that I am reading the words of the

legislation is introduced (*e.g.* ch. xii. 1—20; 43—50; ch. xiii. 1—16; ch. xx.), the style and mode of expression recall the general tone of the Book's later sections. Style indeed is so much a matter of instinctive perception and feeling, and unity of style is a thing so little admitting of proof, that no writer can do much more than state his own impressions on the subject, it being quite impossible adequately to represent the grounds of them. For our own part, we feel bound to echo the conclusion of Kalisch, who says—"We see the completest harmony in all parts of Exodus; we consider it as a perfect whole, pervaded throughout by one spirit and the same leading ideas."¹

The only reasonable ground which exists for any doubt or hesitation on the question of the unity is the fact, already noted,² of the markedly sectional character of the work—its division into a number of distinctly separate portions, not very skilfully or artistically joined together. But this peculiarity is exactly what might have been looked for in a work which was written by snatches in the rare intervals of leisure allowed by a life of extreme and almost constant activity, and under circumstances that precluded attention to literary finish. If the writer of Exodus was a contemporary, who from time to time placed on record the series of events whereof he was a witness, soon after their occurrence, and who ultimately arranged his various pieces into a volume, the result would naturally be that which the Book of Exodus presents to us.³ Had a compiler, a mere man of letters, effected the arrangement, it is probable that the result would have been, in a literary point of view, better, *i.e.* more artistic—the breaks in the narrative would have been fewer and less abrupt; repetitions would have been avoided; the roughness inseparable from a work hastily accomplished in odds and ends of time would have been smoothed down, and we should have had a more finished literary composition. Thus, the "fragmentary character" of Exodus is an important and precious indication that we have the work in its original form—the statue as it was rough-hewn in the quarry—and that it has not undergone the process of polishing and smoothing at the hands of a redactor, compiler, or supplementarist.

§ 4. MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP.

It is an axiom of sound criticism that books are to be attributed to the authors to whom tradition assigns them, unless *very* strong reasons can be shown to the contrary.⁴ Exodus, and indeed the Pentateuch generally, has

author of the Second Legislation," it is perfectly clear that the supposed notes of authorship are wholly arbitrary and fanciful.

¹ "Historical and Critical Commentary," Introduction, p. x.

² See above, § 2, p. iii.

³ Compare Rosenmüller, "Prolegomena in Exodum," § 2, in his 'Scholia in Vetus Testamentum,' vol. ii. pp. 2—4.

⁴ See 'Aids to Faith,' Essay vi. § 3; pp. 238—9

been assigned to Moses by a unanimous tradition, current alike among Pharisees and Sadducees, among Jews and Samaritans, among those who ascribed a sacred character to the work and those who regarded it as a mere human production. No other author has ever been put forward as a rival candidate to Moses;¹ and we must either ascribe the work to a wholly unknown and nameless writer,² who, with a marvellous humility and self-abnegation, while composing the most important treatise which the world had seen, concealed himself so effectually as to secure his own complete oblivion, or we must admit that the tradition is in the right, and that Moses, the hero of Exodus, and of the three following books, was also their composer.

It has sometimes been argued that the historical Moses, considering the time when he lived, and the condition of the world at that period, could not possibly have been the author even of a single book of the Pentateuch. Some have supposed that alphabetic writing was not at the time invented, and that if the Egyptian hieroglyphic system was anterior to Moses, it could not have been employed to embody with any definiteness the articulate sounds of the Hebrew language.³ Others, without going these lengths, have maintained that so grand a work as the Pentateuch could not possibly have been produced at so early a period of the world's history, when literature, like everything else, must have been in its infancy. Thus De Wette urges that the Pentateuch is altogether beyond the literary capabilities of the age, containing within it, as he says it does, "every element of Hebrew literature in the highest perfection to which it ever attained, and so necessarily belonging to the acme and not to the childhood of the nation." It is absurd, he thinks, to suppose that in so rude and primitive a time the Hebrew nation should have produced a writer possessing such powers of mind, and such a mastery over his native language as to "leave nothing for succeeding authors but to follow in his footsteps."⁴

In answer to these preliminary objections it is to be noted—first, that alphabetic writing is a much earlier discovery than has sometimes been supposed, and that there is every reason to believe that its use was widely spread over the world in ages long anterior to Moses. Berosus believed it to have been an antediluvian invention, and related that Xisuthrus, or

¹ When Jerome says that the Pentateuch may be considered either the work of Moses or of Ezra, he does not mean to ascribe to the latter anything more than that sort of verbal revision (modernising of language, explanation or possibly alteration of obsolete names, and the like) which tradition connects with his name. He distinctly calls Moses the "author" and Ezra the "restorer" of the work.

² It does not much mend the matter if we suppose, with Ewald, half-a-dozen such writers, all equally reticent; while this theory introduces the fresh difficulty that the patchwork of six or seven different hands is found to be pervaded by a marked unity of style and of design.

³ See Norton, 'Genuineness of the Gospels,' vol. ii. Appendix. Note D, § 3; pp. 439—441

⁴ De Wette, 'Einleitung in d. alt. Test.' § 163, sub fin

Hasis-adra, his "Noah," consigned to writing the learning of the old world before the Flood, impressing it on tablets of baked clay, which he buried at Sippara, and exhumed after the Flood had subsided.¹ Existing Babylonian inscriptions upon bricks and gems² are believed to date from before B.C. 2000. Ewald remarks,³ that the words expressive of "writing" (כתב), "book" (ספר), and "ink" (דיו), are common to all the branches and dialects of Semitic speech, except that the Ethiopic and the Southern Arabian have קטב for "to write," and deduces from this fact the conclusion that writing in a book with ink must have been known to the earliest Semites before they separated off into their various tribes, nations, and families.⁴ The Hittites were certainly acquainted with letters before the time of Moses; for not only had they written treaties with the Egyptians at a period anterior to the Exodus,⁵ but a Hittite author is mentioned by Pentaour, a royal scribe of the reign of Rameses the Great.⁶ Alphabetic writing was probably an art well known in the greater part of Western Asia from a date preceding not only Moses but Abraham.

The Egyptian system of hieroglyphic writing was also beyond all doubt complete several centuries before Abraham. This system is sometimes supposed to be little more than a representation of ideas by pictorial forms; but in reality it is almost wholly phonetic.⁷ There would be no difficulty in transliterating the Pentateuch into hieroglyphic characters,⁸ which one familiar with them would read off so as to be intelligible to a Jew. If Moses, therefore, did not possess an alphabetic system of his own, and was acquainted with the hieroglyphic system, which is not impossible, since he was bred up at the court, and "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22), he might have written the Pentateuch in that character. At any rate, it would have been easy for him to adopt the cursive hieratic character, which, while based upon the hieroglyphics, presents no pictures of objects, but only a set of straight or curvilinear lines. The hieratic writing was certainly in use as early as the time of the twelfth or thirteenth dynasty,⁹ and therefore long anterior to the Exodus.

With regard to the objection of De Wette, that a work so perfect as the Pentateuch is altogether beyond the literary capabilities of the age of Moses,

¹ Frag. 7 (in C. Müller's 'Fragm. Hist. Græc.,' vol. ii. p. 501).

² Rawlinson, 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 80, 87, 199; 'History of Herodotus,' vol. i. pp. 360—2, 2nd edition.

³ 'Geschichte des Volkes Israel,' vol. i. p. 77.

⁴ The argument is analogous to those drawn by Professor Max Müller from the words common to all Aryan dialects, and seems to be quite unanswerable.

⁵ 'Records of the Past,' vol. iv. pp. 27—32.

⁶ Brugsch, 'Histoire d'Égypte,' p. 139.

⁷ Lenormant, 'Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne,' vol. i. p. 500; Birch, in Bunsen's 'Egypt,' vol. v. pp. 599—617.

⁸ For the details of the process, see Canon Cook's essay 'On Egyptian Words in the Pentateuch,' published in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pp. 476—492.

⁹ 'Records of the Past,' vol. vi. p. 134. Compare Birch, 'Ancient Egypt,' p. 49.

the present writer may perhaps be allowed to quote a passage which he wrote twenty years ago, and which he has never seen answered:—"De Wette's statement is a gross exaggeration of the reality. Considered as a literary work, the Pentateuch is not the production of an advanced or refined, but of a simple and rude age. Its characteristics are plainness, inartificiality, absence of rhetorical ornament, and occasional defective arrangement. The only style which it can be truly said to bring to perfection, is that simple one of clear and vivid narrative which is always best attained in the early dawn of a nation's literature, as a Herodotus, a Froissart, and a Stow sufficiently indicate. In other respects it is quite untrue to say that the work goes beyond all later Hebrew efforts. We look in vain through the Pentateuch for the gnomic wisdom of Solomon, the eloquent denunciations of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, or the lofty flights of Isaiah. It is absurd to compare the song of Moses, as a literary production, even with some of the psalms of David, much more to parallel it with Ezekiel's eloquence and Homeric variety, or Isaiah's awful depth and solemn majesty of repose. In a literary point of view it may be questioned whether Moses did so much for the Hebrews as Homer for the Greeks, or whether his writings had really as great an influence on the after productions of his countrymen. And if his literary greatness still surprises us, if Hebrew literature still seems in his person to reach too suddenly a high excellence, albeit not so high a one as has been argued—let us remember, in the first place, that Moses was not, any more than Homer, the first writer of his nation, but only happens to be the first whose writings have come down to us. 'Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona.' Moses seems so great because we do not possess the works of his predecessors, and so are unable to trace the progress of Hebrew literature up to him. Had we the 'Songs of Israel' (Num. xxi. 17), and the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord' (*ib.* 14), which he quotes, we might find him no literary phenomenon at all, but as a writer merely on a level with others of his age and nation."¹ Moreover, recent research has shown that in Egypt, long prior to the time at which Moses wrote, literature had become a profession, and was cultivated in a variety of branches with ardour and considerable success. Morality, history, epistolary correspondence, poetry, medical science, novel-writing, were known as separate studies, and taken for their special subjects by numerous writers, from a date anterior to Abraham.² In the times of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, under one or the other of which the Exodus almost certainly took place, Egyptian literature reached its acme: lengthy works were composed, such as that contained in the "Great Harris Papyrus," which is 133 feet long by nearly seventeen inches broad;³ writers enjoyed

¹ 'Aids to Faith,' Essay vi. pp. 245—6 (published in 1861).

² See Goodwin, in 'Cambridge Essays' for 1858, pp. 230—26a.

³ 'Records of the Past,' vol. vi. p. 21.

a high status and reputation; their compositions were engraved upon temple walls;¹ and it passed into a proverb that literature was the first and best of all employments.² Moses, educated at the court under one or other of these dynasties, and intended doubtless for official life, would necessarily receive a literary training, and would be perfectly competent to produce an extensive literary work, the exact merit of which would of course depend on his ability and genius.

If then there is no obstacle arising out of the circumstances of the time when Moses lived, to hinder our regarding him as the author of Exodus, and if tradition is unanimous in assigning it to him, nothing remains but to ask what internal evidence the book itself offers upon the subject—does it support, or does it make against, the hypothesis of the Mosaic authorship?

And first, as to language and style. We have already noticed³ the simplicity of style observable in Exodus and the Pentateuch generally, which places it on a par with the early writings of other nations, and proves it to belong to the dawn of Hebrew literature. The language is generally allowed to be archaic, or at any rate to contain archaisms; and though some writers deny this, and assert that the unusual forms and words which characterise the Pentateuch are “not so much archaisms as peculiarities,” yet this conclusion is contrary to the general opinion of Hebrew scholars,⁴ and has the appearance of being rather a position forced on its maintainers by the exigencies of controversy, than one assumed spontaneously from a dispassionate consideration of the linguistic facts. Such features as the employment of the pronoun *אני* for the third person of both genders, of *ילד* for “girl” as well as “boy,” and of the full form *הוא* instead of the abraded *הוא* for the termination of the third person plural of the preterite, are by the very nature of things and the universal laws of language, archaic. The archaic character of other peculiar forms is also indicated by the fact that several of them occur besides only in Joshua, while some are common to the Pentateuch with none but very late books, e.g. Chronicles and Ezekiel, books written in the decay of the language, when it is notorious that writers studiously imitate the old forms.⁵ Exodus has its full share of these peculiarities, which we must venture, with the bulk of Hebrew critics, still to term “archaisms,” and has therefore at least

¹ As the poem of Pentaour, which may to this day be read on the walls of the great Temple of Karnak.

² In the ‘Praise of Learning’ we read—“Consider that there is not anything beyond letters” (‘Records of the Past,’ vol. viii. p. 147); and again—“Love letters as thy mother; it is a greater possession than all employments” (*ib.* p. 148); and—“Consider, there is not an employment destitute of superior ones, except the scribe’s, which is the first” (*ib.* p. 153).

³ *Supra*, p. x.

⁴ The archaic character of the language of Exodus and the Pentateuch generally is maintained by Jahn, Fritzsche, De Wette, Hävernick, Keil and Delitzsch, Marsh, Stuart, Bishop Harold Browne, Canon Cook, Dean Perowne, and others; it is impugned by Vater, Gesenius, and a few more.

⁵ Perowne, in Dr. Smith’s ‘Dictionary of the Bible,’ vol. ii. p. 783.

as much claim as any other of the five books to be regarded as Mosaic on this ground.

The language of Exodus has also another peculiarity, which, if it does not prove the Mosaic authorship, fits in exactly with it, viz. the frequent occurrence of Egyptian words and phrases. This subject has been treated elaborately by Canon Cook¹ and M. Harkavy,² who have proved beyond all question that in that part of his narrative which deals with Egyptian matters, words are constantly used by the author of Exodus which are either pure Egyptian, or common to Egyptian with Hebrew. From thirty to forty such words occur in the first sixteen chapters.³ Subsequently they are more rare; but a certain number of Egyptian words occur even in the later chapters,⁴ showing how familiar the writer was with the language, and how naturally he had recourse to it where the vocabulary of his native tongue was defective. Egyptian phrases are also not unfrequently used, as "the lip of the river" (ch. ii. 5) for "the brink of the river;" "chiefs of tribute" (ch. i. 11) for "taskmasters;" an "ark of bulrushes" (ii. 3); "making persons' savour to stink" (v. 21); "consuming enemies as stubble" (ch. xv. 7), etc.

Next, with respect to the matter of the book, it is to be remarked that the writer—whoever he was—shows a notable acquaintance with the customs, climate, and productions of Egypt; an acquaintance such as to imply long residence in the country, and the sort of familiarity which it takes years to acquire, with the natural phenomena, the method of cultivation, the religious ideas, and other habits and usages of the people. Under this head it is important to observe that large additions are constantly being made to the stock of our Egyptian knowledge by learned research into the native documents, which are copious, even for the time anterior to Moses, with this result hitherto—that fresh illustrations of the truthfulness with which Egypt and the Egyptians are portrayed in Exodus continually reveal themselves, while contradictions of the narrative, discrepancies, even difficulties, are almost wholly absent. There was a time when the author of the Pentateuch was boldly taxed with ignorance of Egyptian customs,⁵ and when it was argued on this ground that he could not possibly be Moses. Now, no one ventures on such an assertion. The works of Hengstenberg⁶ and Canon Cook⁷ are sufficient to preclude the

¹ 'Appendix to Exodus,' Essay ii. 'On Egyptian Words in the Pentateuch,' in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pp. 476—482.

² See an article entitled 'Les Mots Égyptiens de la Bible,' published in the 'Journal Asiatique' for March, 1870.

³ Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 244. note.

⁴ E.g. *Shesh*, in ch. xxv. 4; *tacharah*, in ch. xxviii. 32; *thummim*, in ch. xxviii. 30; and *lun*, in ch. xxix. 40.

⁵ Von Bohlen, 'Commentar,' p. 360.

⁶ 'Ägypten und Moses,' Berlin, 1840. Translated by Robbins, with additional notes by Dr Cooke Taylor, in Clark's Edinburgh Series, Edinburgh, 1845.

⁷ 'Comment on Exodus' in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. London, 1871.

possibility of the revival of this line of attack; but the counter-evidence continually accumulates. Not a year passes without the discovery of fresh passages in Egyptian literature, which harmonise with and illustrate the narrative delivered to us in Exodus.

It is further observable that the writer, who has this wide and exact acquaintance with Egypt and the Egyptians, is also perfectly familiar with the character of the Sinaitic peninsula, with its vegetable and animal products, with its natural phenomena, as that of the manna, with its rare springs, sometimes sweet, sometimes "bitter" (ch. xv. 23), its wells, its occasional palm-groves (*ib.* 27), its acacia trees (ch. xxv. 10, 23; xxvi. 15, etc.), its long stretches of dry sand, its bare rocks and lofty mountains. It has been well said that "the chapters of Exodus which belong either to the early sojourn of Moses or to the wanderings of the Israelites, are pervaded by a peculiar tone, a local colouring, an atmosphere (so to speak) of the desert, which has made itself felt by all those who have explored the country, to whatever school of religious thought they may have belonged."¹

This double knowledge of Egypt and of the Sinaitic peninsula, joined to the antique character of the work, seems to amount to a *proof* that the book of Exodus was written either by Moses or by one of those who accompanied him in his journey from the land of Goshen to the borders of Palestine. There was no period between the Exodus and the reign of Solomon when an Israelite—and the writer was certainly an Israelite—was likely to be familiar either with Egypt or with the Sinaitic peninsula, much less with both. There was little intercourse between the Hebrews and Egypt from the time of the passage of the Red Sea to that of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; and if occasionally during this period an Israelite went down into Egypt and sojourned there (1 Chr. iv. 18), it was a very unlikely thing that he should visit the region about Sinai, which lay above 150 miles out of his route. Add to this the dangers of the journey and the absence of any conceivable motive for it, and the conclusion seems almost certain that only one of those who, after being brought up among the Egyptians, traversed the "wilderness of the wanderings" on his way to Palestine, can have composed the existing record.

The conclusion thus reached is, for all critical purposes, sufficient. If the narrative is from the pen of an eye-witness, it must possess the highest degree of historical credibility,² and, so far as accuracy and trustworthiness are concerned, can gain nothing, or at any rate very little, by being ascribed to one of the emigrants rather than another. We trust the last book of the 'De Bello Gallico' no less than the remainder, though written by Hirtius and not by Cæsar; and the authenticity of Exodus would be no whit

¹ Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 244.

² See the writer's 'Bampton Lectures,' pp. 21, 22, and compare Cornwall Lewis on the 'Credibility of Early Roman History,' vol. i. p. 16.

diminished by Joshua or Caleb being its author instead of Moses. Could we suppose it written by a mere ordinary Israelite, the case would be somewhat different; but it is evidently impossible, considering the circumstances of the time, to ascribe a work of such high literary merit, and one evidencing such varied and extensive knowledge, to any one below the rank of a high officer, a leading man among the people.

The absolute *Mosaic* authorship of Exodus is thus a matter not so much of historical importance as of literary curiosity. Still it is of interest to know the real author of any great book, and essential to a right estimate of the character and work of Moses that we should understand whether or no he added to his other eminent qualities the literary ability and power which "Exodus" displays. What then does the Book itself reveal to us on this subject? In the first place it shows us the ability of Moses to write (ch. xxiv. 4); in the next it informs us that he was expressly commanded by God to write an account of some of those very matters which are contained in Exodus (ch. xvii. 14; xxxiv. 27); in the third place it distinctly tells us in one passage that he "wrote all the words of the Lord" (ch. xxxiv. 4), these "words" being (according to almost all commentators) the passage which extends from ch. xx. 22 to the end of ch. xxiii.; finally, it speaks of a "book" which it calls "*the book*"¹ (the expression used being סֵפֶר and not סֵפֶרֶת), wherein one of his writings was to be inserted, whereby it would seem that at the time of the war with Amalek (ch. xvii. 8—14) Moses already had a book in which he was putting on record the circumstances of the Israelites' deliverance—a book, as Keil says,² "appointed for the record of the glorious works of God." The question naturally occurs to a candid mind, Why should not this be the book which we possess? why go out of our way to suppose a second author unnamed and unnameable, when here is one distinctly proclaimed—an author more competent to the task than any other Israelite then living—and moreover the very man to whom an ancient and uniform tradition has always ascribed the work in question? There should be some very cogent arguments, derivable from the contents of the book, to set against this evident *prima facie* probability, in order even to raise a doubt on the subject, and make it worth while to pursue the inquiry any further.

What then is there said to be of this kind, constituting a difficulty in our acceptance of the Mosaic authorship? First, the fact that Moses is always spoken of in the third person. Now, as Xenophon and Cæsar, in writing histories of which they were the heroes, spoke of themselves always

¹ Knobel argues that the expression, "write this in the book," merely means "put this into writing" ('Exegetisches Handbuch,' vol. ii. p. 178), and quotes Num. v. 23; 1 Sam. x. 25; Jer. xxxii. 10; and Job xix. 23, as bearing out this explanation; but of these passages only the last is to the point, and there the LXX. have ἐν βιβλίῳ, not ἐν τῇ βιβλίῳ, as if their copies had had the reading סֵפֶר.

² 'Commentary on the Old Testament,' vol. ii. p. 81.

in the third person, it is at least not unnatural for a man who has to write this sort of history to do so. Nay, it may rather be said to be distinctly natural. Perpetual egotism is wearisome to the reader, and disagreeable to the writer who is not puffed-up by a sense of his own importance. The use of the third person throws a veil, at any rate, over the egotistic character of a work, softens it down, half obliterates it. We forget the writer in his work, when the first person does not constantly obtrude him on us, and pardon his being the hero of his own narrative when he is sufficiently modest to preserve an *incognito*. Moreover, speaking of oneself in the third person was common in Egypt in Moses' day. The inscriptions which kings set up to commemorate their conquests were sometimes written wholly in the third person,¹ sometimes partly in the third and partly in the first.² The inscriptions placed by private individuals on their tombs generally began in the third person.³ With such examples before him, it cannot be regarded as surprising that Moses avoided altogether the use of the first person in his narrative and confined himself wholly to the third.

Secondly, it is said that Moses is spoken of—at any rate in one place (ch. xi. 3), perhaps also in ch. vi. 26, 27—in a way in which he would not be likely to have spoken of himself. The objection taken may, in both instances, be allowed, but without the conclusion following which is supposed to follow. For the passages are both of them parenthetic, and also abnormal. They do not speak of Moses as he is commonly spoken of; and they are so isolated from the context that their removal would leave no gap, produce no difficulty. They are thus exactly such passages as may have been introduced on that review of the book which is ascribed to Ezra by ancient authorities,⁴ and generally allowed to have taken place by moderns. The question whether Moses or a nameless contemporary is to be regarded as the author of Exodus cannot properly be ruled by reference to one or two passages—especially parenthetic passages. We must look upon the matter more broadly. We must ask ourselves, Is the entire presentation of the personal character and qualifications of the great Israelite leader which the book offers more consonant with the view that Moses himself wrote it, or with the theory that it was composed by one of the younger and subordinate Israelite leaders, as Joshua or Caleb? Now, nothing is more striking in that presentation than the humble estimate made of the character, gifts, powers,

¹ As the statistical tablet of Karnak, or 'Annals of Thothmes III.,' published in the 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 19—28, and the inscription of Pianchi Mer-amon in the same volume (pp. 81—104).

² This is the case in the long inscription of Thothmes III. ('Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 33—58), where the person changes on page 53; and again in the 'Annals of Rameses III.' ('Records,' vol. vi. pp. 23—70), where changes of person occur on pp. 34, 50, 52, 59, and 69.

³ For specimens, see the 'Records,' vol. vi. p. 7; vol. x. pp. 3, 7, etc. Sometimes a funereal inscription is entirely in the third person, as that of Ameni ('Records,' vol. vi. pp. 3, 4).

⁴ Tertullian, 'De Cultu Femin.' § 3; Clem. Alex. 'Strom.' i. 22; Hieronym. 'Ad Helvid.' vol. ii. p. 212; etc.

and even of the personal conduct of the great leader. From first to last he is never praised; once only (in the passage objected to) he is said to have come to be "very great in the sight of Pharaoh's servants" and the Egyptian people. His faults are set forth without any disguise or extenuation: his hastiness and unjustifiable violence in "slaying the Egyptian" (ch. ii. 12); his foolish assumption of authority over his brethren (*ib.* 13); his timidity when he found that he was likely to be punished for his crime (*ib.* 14, 15); his unwillingness to undertake the mission which God assigned to him (ch. iv. 1—13); his neglect of the covenant of circumcision (*ib.* 24—26); his irreverent remonstrance when success did not attend his first application to Pharaoh (ch. v. 22—24); and his want of self-control when on account of the sin of his people in worshipping the golden calf he "cast the Tables"—written by the finger of God—"out of his hands and brake them" (ch. xxxii. 19). Nothing is said of his possessing any remarkable ability. On the contrary, he is represented as insisting, over and over again, on his incompetency, on his want of eloquence (ch. iv. 10), his insignificance ("Who am I?" ch. iii. 11), and his inability to persuade even his own people (ch. iv. 1; vi. 12). No credit is assigned to him for anything that he does; for his bold and courageous behaviour before Pharaoh; for that organisation of the people which must have preceded the Exodus;¹ for his conduct of the march; or for that faith which never wavered, even when he and his people were shut in between the irresistible host of Pharaoh and the waters of an apparently untraversable sea (ch. xiv. 13, 14). While it is in complete harmony with the general practice of the sacred writers, and with the spirit of true religion, that such reticence and such a disparaging tone should be employed by a writer respecting himself, it is quite inconceivable that either Joshua or any other companion of Moses should have written of him in this style. To his contemporaries, to those who had seen his miracles, and who owed their lives and liberties to his bold and successful guidance, Moses must have been a hero, a paladin, the first, the greatest, and the most admirable of men. We may see what they thought of him by the words with which Deuteronomy closes—"There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel" (Deut. xxxiv. 10—12).

If then the style and diction of Exodus, combined with the knowledge which it exhibits both of Egypt and of the Sinaitic peninsula, indicate unmistakably for its author either Moses or one of the other leading Israelites of Moses' time, there cannot be any reasonable doubt towards

¹ See the remarks of Canon Cook in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 305. "Note on v. 12."

which of the two theories the balance of the internal evidence inclines. It is simply inconceivable that one of those who looked up to Moses with the reverence and admiration that he must have inspired in his followers, could have produced the unflattering portraiture which Exodus presents to us of one of the very greatest of men. It is, on the other hand, readily conceivable, and completely in accordance with what experience teaches of the thoughts and words of great saints concerning themselves, that Moses should have given such a representation of himself. The internal evidence is thus in harmony with the external. Both alike point to Moses as the author of this Book and of those which follow.

§ 5. CHRONOLOGY.

The internal chronology of the Book of Exodus is a matter of great simplicity, presenting only a single point of doubt or difficulty. This is the question whether the Hebrew text of ch. xii. 40 is to be regarded as sound and genuine, or whether it is to be corrected from the Samaritan version and the Septuagint. In the Hebrew text we read: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years;" or more literally, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt,¹ was 430 years." But in the Septuagint the passage runs thus: "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt *and in the land of Canaan*, was 430 years;"² and in the Samaritan thus: "The sojourning of the children of Israel *and of their fathers*, which they sojourned *in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt*, was 430 years." If the Hebrew text is sound we must count 430 years from the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the Exodus; if it is corrupt, and to be corrected from the two ancient versions, the time of the sojourn will be reduced one-half, for it was a space of exactly 215 years from the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the descent of Jacob into Egypt.³

In favour of the short period it is urged, first, that the genealogies contained in the Pentateuch, and especially the genealogy of Moses and Aaron (Ex. vi. 16—20), will not admit of the longer term;⁴ and, secondly,

¹ The verb and the substantive used are cognate; and the passage is correctly, as well as literally, rendered by the LXX.: ἡ δὲ κατοίκησις τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ, ἣν κατέκησαν ἐν γῇ Αἰγύπτῳ.

² In some copies of the Septuagint (e.g. the Codex Alexandrinus) the reading is—"The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they and their fathers sojourned in Egypt and in the land of Canaan, was 430 years," which approaches to the Samaritan, but still differs from it.

³ From the entrance of Abraham into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was twenty-five years (Gen. xii. 4; xvii. 1, 21); from the birth of Isaac to that of Jacob was sixty years (ib. xxv. 26). Jacob was 130 years old when he went into Egypt (ib. xlvii. 9). But 25 + 60 + 130 = 215.

⁴ So Kennicott, Pool, Houbigant, Geddes, Morinus, Cappellus, Deyling, Köppen, Usher, Marsham, Buddæus, Bengel, Knobel, Colenso, etc. The last-named writer, who has collated all the genealogies contained in the Pentateuch, has shown that they vary between four and six names, tending thus, in some degree, to confirm the estimate of four generations from Levi to Moses.

that St. Paul reckoned no more than 430 years from the call of Abraham to the Exodus (Gal. iii. 17). Now, certainly, if the genealogies are complete, and especially that of Moses and Aaron, the longer term of years cannot have been reached, since even if Kohath was but a year old at the time of his being carried into Egypt (Gen. xlii. 11), and if Amram was born in the last year of Kohath's life, and Moses in the last year of Amram's, the eightieth year of Moses, in which the Exodus took place (Ex. vii. 7), would be only the 350th from the descent into Egypt and not the 430th.¹ But the ordinary Jewish practice with regard to genealogies was to contract them; and it is quite possible that in *all* the recorded genealogies of this period, except that of Joshua (1 Chr. vii. 22-27), there are omissions. The number of generations in the genealogy of Joshua is ten, an amount very much more consonant with the period of 430 than with that of 215 years; and this number we are bound to accept as historical, since there could be no possible reason why the writer of Chronicles should have invented it; so that, on the whole, the argument to be drawn from the Scriptural genealogies is rather in favour of the long period than against it. It is the Oriental practice to call any male descendant a son, any female descendant a daughter;² it is the Jewish practice to contract genealogies by means of omissions;³ it is unheard-of to expand a genealogy by thrusting in unhistorical names: there must consequently have been ten generations from Joseph to Joshua. Ten generations would certainly, at this period of Jewish history, represent 400 years, and might easily cover 430, giving an average of forty-three years to a generation, instead of the thirty-three years of later times.⁴

With respect to St. Paul's estimate (Gal. iii. 17), it would simply show that, in writing to Greek-speaking Jews, whose only Bible was the Septuagint version, he made use of that translation. It would not even prove his own opinion upon the point, since the chronological question is not pertinent to his argument, and, whatever he may have thought upon it, he would certainly not have obtruded upon his Galatian disciples a wholly irrelevant discussion.

In favour of the longer term the *great* argument is the general one, that

¹ Colenso's statement is correct—"Now supposing that Kohath was only an infant, when brought down by his father to Egypt with Jacob, and that he begat Amram at the very end of his life, when 133 years old, and that Amram, in like manner, begat Moses when he was 137 years old, still these two numbers added to eighty years, the age of Moses at the time of the Exodus, would only amount to 350 years, instead of 430" ('The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua,' Part I., p. 92).

² No one would suppose that "a daughter of Levi" in Ex. ii. 1 meant more than a female descendant of Levi; yet when exactly the same phrase is used of the same person in Num. xxvi. 59, it has been argued that an actual daughter must be intended.

³ In the genealogy of Ezra (Ezr. vii. 1-5) at least seven names are omitted; in that of our Lord (Matt. i. 2-16) at least three, probably more. A comparison of 1 Chr. ix. 4-19 with Nehem. xi. 4-22, gives additional evidence of the practice of omission.

⁴ Herod. i. 112—γενεὰ τοῖς ἀνδράσι ἐκατόν ἑνὰ δὲ ἔτη. Compare Clem Alex 'Strom.' i. 21.

the Hebrew text is to be taken as the true original unless it contains internal signs of imperfection, and that here there are no such signs. On the other hand, there are signs that the Septuagint and Samaritan texts are interpolated—viz. first, their variations;¹ and secondly, the fact that the length of the sojourn in Egypt is alone naturally before the writer's mind at this point of his narrative. A further argument is furnished by Gen. xv. 13—16, where the term of the Egyptian sojourn is prophetically given (in round numbers) as 400 years; a passage quoted by St. Stephen (Acts vii. 6), who clearly regards the prophecy as fulfilled. It has been argued that "the 400 years is meant to refer to the time during which the 'seed of Abraham' should be sojourners in a strange land," rather than to the time during which they should suffer oppression, and so, that the sojourn in Canaan is included;² but this exposition, which is admitted to be contrary to the apparent sense,³ cannot possibly be allowed, since Gen. xv. 13—16 speaks of one land and one nation—a nation which should "afflict" them, and which they should "serve," and which at the end of the 400 years should be "judged"—whereas the Canaanites did not "afflict" them, for quarrels about wells (Gen. xxvi. 15—21) are not an "affliction" in the language of Scripture,⁴ and certainly they did not "serve" the Canaanites—neither could it possibly be of the Canaanites that it is said, "That nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge, and *afterward* shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. xv. 14). Finally, the long term is most consonant alike with the estimate formed of the entire number of the grown males at the time of the Exodus (600,000, Ex. xii. 37), and with the details given of particular families in the Book of Numbers, as especially those of the families of the Levites, in ch. iii. 21—39.

If, upon these grounds, the longer term of 430 years for the sojourn in Egypt be preferred to the shorter term of 215 years, the details of the chronology must be arranged as follows:⁵—

	Years.
From the descent of Jacob into Egypt to the death of Joseph . . .	71
" death of Joseph to the birth of Moses . . .	278
" birth of Moses to his flight into Midian . . .	40
" flight of Moses into Midian to his return to Egypt . . .	40
" return of Moses to the Exodus . . .	1
	<hr/> 430

It is a different, and a much more intricate, question, how the chronology of this period is to be attached to the general chronology of mundane

¹ See above, p. xvii.

² Colenso, 'The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua,' Part I, p. 94.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Note the constant use of the terms "affliction" and "afflict" with reference to Egypt in the Pentateuch (Gen. xli. 52; Ex. i. 11, 12; iii. 7, 17; iv. 31; Deut. xxvi. 6, 7). They are never used in reference to any suffering the Israelites may have undergone in Canaan.

⁵ See Keil and Delitzsch, 'Commentary on the Old Testament,' vol. i. p. 414, E. T.; and Kalisch, 'Comment on Exodus,' Introduction, pp. xi.—xiii.

affairs, or even how it is to be united with the later chronology of the Jewish nation. If complete reliance could be placed on the genuineness of a particular text (1 Kings vi. 1), the difficulties indeed of this latter problem would in a great measure disappear; for, having fixed the date of the commencement of Solomon's temple, which was certainly begun *about* B.C. 1000, we should only have to add to the exact date on which we decided, the number 480, in order to obtain an equally exact date for the Exodus. It was in this way that Archbishop Ussher produced his date of B.C. 1491, which is still maintained by Kalisch,¹ and with an unimportant variation by Keil.² But the genuineness of the words in 1 Kings vi. 1—"in the 480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt"—is open to serious question.³ They stand alone, unsupported by anything analogous in the whole of the rest of Scripture.⁴ They were apparently unknown to Josephus, to Theophilus of Antioch, and to Clemens of Alexandria, who would necessarily have quoted them, had they existed in their copies.⁵ They are also at variance with the tradition glanced at by St. Paul (Acts xiii. 20), that from the partition of Canaan to Samuel was a space of 450 years. But if, on these grounds, we surrender the genuineness of 1 Kings vi. 1, we are launched at once upon an open sea of conjecture. St. Paul's statement is defective both in consequence of his using the expression "about," and in consequence of his not marking whether he means to include the judgeship of Samuel in the 450 years or to exclude it. His statement leaves moreover the space between the death of Moses and the partition of Canaan unestimated. The detailed statements in the books of Scripture from Joshua to Kings are defective, since in the first place they leave many periods unestimated,⁶ and further, they are expressed to a large extent in *round* numbers,⁷ which are fatal to exact computation. It has been calculated that, on the most probable estimate, the details of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel would produce for the period between the Exodus and the foundation of the Temple, 600, 612, or 628 years.⁸ On the other hand, it has been argued with considerable force that these estimates are greatly in excess of the real time—that different judges bore office

¹ 'Historical and Critical Commentary,' Introduction, p. xiv.

² By lengthening the duration of the kingdom of Judah by one year, Keil makes the date B.C. 1492 ('Biblical Commentary,' vol. i. p. 414).

³ Hales says—"The period of 480 years is a forgery, foisted into the text" ('Chronology,' vol. ii. p. 287). The date is also rejected by Jackson, Clinton, Stuart Poole, Bunsen, Lepsius, Lenormant, Brugsch, and others, but defended by Canon Cook and Mr. Greswell.

⁴ The words involve the assumption of the Exodus as an era from which to date events. But the idea of an era nowhere else appears in Scripture, and was unknown to the nations of antiquity until the time of Thucydides.

⁵ See the writer's note on the passage in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. ii. pp. 51—59.

⁶ As the periods during which Joshua, Shamgar and Samuel judged Israel; the time between the death of Joshua and the first servitude; and the reign of Saul (estimated at forty years by St. Paul, Acts xiii. 21).

⁷ Forty years (Judg. iii. 11; v. 81; viii. 28; xiii. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 18); twenty years (Judg. v. 8; xvi. 81; 1 Sam. vii. 2); eighty years (Judg. iii. 30); 300 years (2 xi. 26).

⁸ Clinton, 'Fasti Hellenici' vol. i. p. 312

simultaneously in different parts of Palestine,¹ and that the actual period which elapsed from the Exodus to Solomon's accession did not much exceed 300 years. The result is that the best and most learned of modern critics vary in their dates for the Exodus by as much as 332 years, some placing it as late as B.C. 1300, and others as early as B.C. 1632.

It might have been supposed that the difficulties of the Scriptural chronology would have received light from the parallel chronology of Egypt, or even have been set at rest by it; but Egyptian chronology has difficulties of its own which render it one of the most abstruse of studies, and preclude the possibility of any positive conclusions being formed respecting it, unless by the method of arbitrary selection from among co-equal authorities. Hence it is not yet a settled point among Egyptologists, under which dynasty, much less under which king, the Exodus took place, some placing it as early as Thothmes III., the fifth king of the eighteenth dynasty, and others as late as Seti-Menephthah, the fifth king of the nineteenth. An interval of above two centuries separates these reigns. On the whole, the preponderance of authority is in favour of the Exodus having fallen under the nineteenth, rather than the eighteenth dynasty, and under either Seti-Menephthah or his father Menephthah,² who were the fifth and fourth kings. The Egyptian tradition upon the subject, recorded by Manetho,³ Chæremon,⁴ and others, points evidently to one or other of these kings, and has generally been taken as decisive in favour of the father. But a hieratic inscription,⁵ deciphered and translated by Dr. Eisenlohr of Heidelberg in 1872, has been thought by some to incline the scale towards the son, Seti-Menephthah, whose reign seems to have been followed by a period of revolution and disturbance, described in terms almost identical with those in which Manetho speaks of the time that followed the Exodus.

If we accept Manetho's account of the period in Egyptian history to which the Exodus belongs, we shall have as the probable date of the event, calculated from Egyptian sources,⁶ about B.C. 1300, or from that to B.C. 1350. Four hundred and thirty years before this will bring us to the eighteenth century B.C., when Egypt was, according to all writers,⁷ under the dominion of the Shepherd kings. This will agree well with the tradition, which George the Syncellus says was universal,⁸ that Joseph governed Egypt in

¹ Bunsen, 'Egypt's Place in Universal History,' vol. iii. pp. 282—288; Canon Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 248.

² This is the view of Lepsius, Bunsen, Lenormant, Brugsch, and Birch—a combination of authority which it is difficult to resist. The last-named writer says of Menephthah—"It is generally admitted that the Exodus took place in his reign."

³ 'Ap. Joseph. c. Apion.' i. 26, 27.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 32.

⁵ See the 'Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology,' vol. i. pp. 355—384 and compare 'Records of the Past,' vol. viii. pp. 45—47.

⁶ Brugsch makes the year of Menephthah's accession B.C. 1300 ('History of Egypt,' vol. ii p. 314); Wilkinson, B.C. 1245; Lenormant, B.C. 1350 ('Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne,' vol. i pp. 404, 428).

⁷ So Brugsch, Lenormant, Bunsen, Wilkinson, Birch, etc

⁸ Chronographia, p. 62, B

the time of King Apophis, who was the last king of the seventeenth or great Shepherd dynasty. Joseph probably outlived Apophis, and saw the commencement of the eighteenth dynasty, so that the founder of that dynasty, Aahmes, cannot be the "king that knew not Joseph" (Ex. i. 8). Nor could the Israelites have been by that time so numerous as to rouse the king's fears. The Pharaoh intended is probably the founder of the nineteenth dynasty, Rameses I., or his son Seti, the great conqueror. If Moses was born under this monarch, his flight to Midian would have taken place under Rameses II., Seti's son and successor; and his return, forty years later, on the death of the Pharaoh who sought his life, would fall in the reign of Menephthah, the son and successor of Rameses II. It may have been the exhaustion of Egypt through the double loss of the firstborn and of the great bulk of the armed force in the Red Sea, together with the discontent caused by the unwise conduct of the king, that led shortly afterwards to those troubles which supervened on the death of Menephthah—first disputes with regard to the succession, and then a period of complete anarchy.¹ The Israelites were in the Sinaitic peninsula at this time. When the Egyptian troubles came to an end, and Rameses III. began his conquests, they were engaged in their wars on the eastern side of Palestine, and profited by his attack, which weakened their enemies. After Rameses III. Egypt declined; and hence no more is heard of her in the Biblical history till the reign of Solomon. The subjoined table will show at a glance the view here taken of the synchronisms between the Egyptian and the Israelite history from the time of Joseph to the entrance into Canaan.

CECRA B.C.	EGYPTIAN HISTORY.	HEBREW HISTORY.
1900—1700	Egypt under the Shepherd Kings Dynasty XVII.	Joseph in Egypt. His brethren join him. Commencement of the 430 years, about B.C. 1740. Joseph dies about B.C. 1670.
1700	Accession of Dynasty XVIII.	
1400	Accession of Dynasty XIX. (Rameses I. first king).	
1395	Seti I. (great conqueror) . . .	Rise of "king who knew not Joseph." Pithom and Rameses built.
1385	Rameses II. (associated) . . .	Birth of Moses (<i>circa</i> B.C. 1390). Flight of Moses to Midian (<i>circa</i> B.C. 1350).
1320	Menephthah I.	Moses returns from Midian (<i>circa</i> 1311).
1305	Seti II. (Seti-Menephthah) . .	The Exodus (<i>circa</i> B.C. 1310).
1300—1280	Revolution in Egypt. Short reigns of Amon-meses and Siphthah. Period of anarchy.	
1280	Accession of Dynasty XX. Set-Nekht.	
1276	Rameses III. (conqueror) . .	The Israelites enter Canaan (<i>circa</i> B.C. 1270).
1255	Rameses IV	

¹ Birch, 'Egypt from the Earliest Times,' pp. 135—7; Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii pp. 130—6

ON EARLY EGYPTIAN HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY.

The admitted uncertainty of the proper mode of synchronising Egyptian with Biblical history makes it desirable to add in this place a few remarks on the main features of Egyptian chronology and history in the earlier times, that so the reader may be able to judge for himself between the various synchronistic theories which come under his notice, and form his own scheme, if that in the text (*supra*, p. xxii.) does not satisfy him.

It is allowed on all hands that civilisation, kingly government, architecture of a remarkable kind, and fairly advanced mimetic art, existed in Egypt from a time considerably anterior to Abraham. The lowest date that has been assigned, so far as we are aware, by any modern scholar¹ to the commencement of the civilised monarchical Egypt, is B.C. 2250, or from that to B.C. 2450. Some of the most learned writers raise the date by one thousand or two thousand years.² But, setting aside such extravagances, we may state it as universally agreed upon among historians of the present day that the history of Egypt goes back *at least* to the date mentioned above. It is maintained by many that, in this early period, the country was for the most part split up among several distinct kingdoms; but on the other hand it is allowed that at times a single monarchy held the whole, and kings possessed of great power and resources ruled Egypt from the Tower of Syene to the waters of the Mediterranean. Manetho assigned to the period no fewer than fourteen dynasties, and though some of these may be purely mythical,³ and others⁴ may represent lines of petty princes who bore sway in some obscure province, yet a certain number—as the fourth, fifth, sixth, eleventh and twelfth—were beyond a doubt dynasties of great power, dominant over the whole or the greater part of Egypt, and possessed of resources which enabled them to erect monuments of an extraordinary character. The two greatest of the Pyramids belong to the fourth dynasty, and must have been seen by Abraham when he visited Egypt, about B.C. 1950. The Third Pyramid in its present state is the work of a queen of the sixth dynasty. A king of the twelfth erected the obelisk which still stands at Heliopolis, as well as another which lies prostrate in the Fayoum. The artificial Lake Mœris, the Fayoum pyramids, and the celebrated Labyrinth belong to the same period. Egypt from B.C. 2450 (or at any rate from B.C. 2250) to about B.C. 1900 was in a flourishing condition: unattacked by foreign foes, she developed during this time the chief features of her

¹ See the author's 'Origin of Nations,' p. 31, where he has suggested that "the establishment of a settled monarchy in Egypt fell between B.C. 2450 and B.C. 2250." The date suggested by Mr. R. S. Poole is B.C. 2717; that preferred by Sir G. Wilkinson, B.C. 2691.

² Bunsen gives B.C. 3059, Lepsius B.C. 3892, Dr. Brugsch B.C. 4400, Mariette and Lenormant B.C. 5004.

³ As the first three, which have left no remains and no history

⁴ As the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth

architecture and of her sculpture, carried to perfection her complex system of hieroglyphics—and attained very considerable proficiency in most of the useful and ornamental arts. The period of this civilisation was designated by Manetho that of “the Old Empire;” and the phrase has been preserved by some modern historians of Egypt¹ as indicative of a very important reality.

The period of “the Old Empire” was followed by that of “the Middle Empire.” At a date variously estimated, but believed by the present writer to have been about B.C. 1900, Egypt was conquered by a pastoral Asiatic people, which destroyed the old civilisation, defaced the monuments, burnt the cities, and completely demolished the temples. The whole country was plunged for a time into utter ruin and desolation. All the less massive buildings disappeared—literature, unless enshrined in pyramids or buried in sepulchral chambers, ceased to exist—architecture, mimetic art, even the ornamental arts, finding no demand, died out—for a century or more utter barbarism settled down generally over the land, and if it had not been that in a few places native Egyptian dynasties were suffered to drag on a dependent and precarious existence, all the old knowledge would have perished. It was as when the Goths and Vandals and Alans and Alemanni and Burgundians swept over the Roman Empire of the West, and brought in those “Dark Ages” of which so much has been said and so little is known. Egypt for a century or more was crushed under the iron heel of her conquerors. Then, by slow degrees, there was a revival. The barbarism of the invaders yielded to the softening influences of that civilisation which it had nearly, but not quite, annihilated. First the useful, then the ornamental arts, were recalled into life. Temples were built, sphinxes were carved, even statues were attempted by the rude race which had at first despised all arts but war, and all trades but that of the armourer. The court of the invaders, held at Tanis in the Delta, became assimilated to that of the old Egyptian Pharaohs. No great works, however, were attempted; and the memorials of the period which remain are few and insignificant. How long the foreign domination lasted is uncertain, but the five centuries of some writers² are reduced by others to two centuries or two centuries and a half.³ The present writer inclines to the shorter estimate, and would assign to the “Middle Empire” or “Hyksos rule” the period between B.C. 1900 and 1700—or at most that between B.C. 1925 and B.C. 1675.

¹ See Bunsen, ‘Egypt’s Place in Universal History,’ *passim*; Birch, ‘Egypt from the Earliest Times,’ pp. 23–56; etc.

² As Brugsch (‘History of Egypt,’ vol. ii. p. 314), Lenormant (‘Manuel d’histoire Ancienne,’ vol. i. p. 321), and Wilkinson (in the author’s ‘Herodotus,’ vol. ii. pp. 297, 298).

³ The arguments for the shorter period are well stated by Canon Cook in his Essay on the Bearings of Egyptian History upon the Pentateuch (‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ vol. i. part i. pp. 447–8).

The yoke of the invaders was thrown off about B.C. 1700—1675 by an uprising of the native Egyptians against them, under a leader named Aahmes, who had his capital at Thebes. The most brilliant period in Egyptian history—the time of the “New Empire”—now set in. Under the eighteenth dynasty, which consisted of twelve kings and a queen, Egyptian fleets explored the Mediterranean and the Red Seas, commerce flourished, Palestine and Syria were conquered, the Euphrates was crossed, Assyria invaded, and the Khabour made the eastern limit of the Empire. At the same time architecture and all the arts revived; great temples were built, lofty obelisks erected, huge colossi upreared. The duration of the dynasty is variously estimated at from two to three centuries. In assigning to it the period from B.C. 1700 to B.C. 1400 we follow the high authority of Dr. Brugsch. Other writers¹ have assigned it the space from B.C. 1703 to B.C. 1462—from B.C. 1633 to B.C. 1412—and from B.C. 1520 to B.C. 1324.

In the ensuing dynasty—the nineteenth—Egyptian art and literature culminated, while in arms there was a slight retrogression. Seti I. and Rameses II. erected the most magnificent of all Egyptian buildings. Seti was a conqueror, but Rameses was content to resist attack. Towards its close the dynasty showed signs of weakness. Internal troubles broke out. The succession to the crown was disputed; and three or four short reigns were followed by a time of complete anarchy. The dynasty probably held the throne from about B.C. 1400 to B.C. 1280.

Under the twentieth dynasty a rapid decline set in. The second king, Rameses III., was a remarkable monarch, successful in his wars, and great in the arts of peace. But with him the glorious period of the Egyptian monarchy came to an end—his successors rapidly degenerated, and for more than two centuries—until the time of Solomon—there was not the slightest sign of a revival. Architecture, art, literature—all pass under a cloud; and, but for the dynastic lists and the excavated tombs of the kings, we might have supposed that some sudden calamity had engulfed and destroyed the Egyptian people.

It is agreed on all hands that the period within which the Israelites and their ancestors came into contact with Egypt prior to their settlement in Canaan fell within the space occupied in Egyptian history by the dynasties between the twelfth and the twentieth inclusively. Abraham's visit to Egypt is generally assigned to the period called above that of “the Old Empire,” Joseph's residence to the “Middle Empire,” the oppression of the Israelites and the Exodus to the “New Empire.” The chief controversy raised is with respect to the Exodus, which some assign to the nineteenth, some to the eighteenth, some to a period anterior to the eighteenth dynasty. The materials at present existing seem insufficient to determine this controversy; and perhaps the unlearned reader will do best to follow the

¹ Lenormant gives the first of these estimates, Bunsen the second, and Wilkinson the third.

balance of authority, which certainly at present points to the nineteenth as the dynasty, and to Menephthah, son of Rameses II., as the king, under whom the "going forth" of the Israelites took place.

TABULAR VIEW OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN EGYPTIAN HISTORY FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE TWENTIETH DYNASTY, WITH APPROXIMATE DATES.

ABOUT B.C.	DYNASTIES.	CHIEF KINGS.	EVENTS.
2150	Accession of the 12th Dynasty (Theban).	Usurtasen I. Usurtasen III. Amenemhat III.	Obelisks erected at Heliopolis and in the Fayoum. Great Temple of Karnak commenced Ethiopia conquered. Frontier advanced to the Second Cataract. Construction of the Labyrinth, and the artificial Lake Mœris. Egypt invaded by nomadic races from Asia.
1960	Accession of the 13th Dynasty (Theban).		
1900	Accession of the 17th Dynasty (Shepherds).	Set (or Saïtes).	Great Shepherd invasion under Set. Destruction of Egyptian monuments and records.
1700	Accession of the 18th Dynasty (Theban).	Apepi (or Apophis). Aahmes. Thothmes I. Queen Hatasu. Thothmes III. Amenophis III. Amenophis IV. (or Khuenaten), Saankht, Ai, and Tutankhamen (heretic kings). Hor-em-het. Rameses I. Seti I.	Shepherds driven out. Avaris taken. Southern frontier advanced Asia invaded. Campaign in Mesopotamia. Temple of Karnak enlarged. Obelisks erected. Egyptian ships navigate the Red Sea. Campaigns in Asia. Syria and Western Mesopotamia conquered. Assyria invaded and forced to pay a tribute. Great additions made to the Karnak temple. Erection of numerous obelisks ¹ and colossi. A fleet employed in the Mediterranean. Conquests of Thothmes III maintained. Luxor temple erected. The two great sitting colossi set up. Disk-worship introduced. Restoration of the Old Religion. Campaign in Syria. Treaty with Hittites. Great victories over the Shasu (Arabs), Hittites, and natives of N. Africa. Egyptian power re-established in Mesopotamia. Splendid additions made to the Temple of Karnak. Rameseum and city of Pa-Ramesu commenced.
1400	Accession of the 19th Dynasty (Theban).		

¹ Among these were included the tallest existing one, that before the Church of S. John Lateran at Rome, and the obelisk recently placed on the Thames Embankment.

TABULAR VIEW OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN EGYPTIAN HISTORY FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE TWENTIETH DYNASTY, WITH APPROXIMATE DATES.—Continued.

ABOUT B.C.	DYNASTIES.	CHIEF KINGS.	EVENTS.
1400		Rameses II. (reigns 67 years).	Acme of Egyptian civilisation, architecture, and art. Military decline begins. Peace made with the Hittites on terms of perfect equality. Mesopotamia relinquished. Great magnificence in building. Rameseum completed and adorned with huge colossi. Rock-temple of Ipsambul constructed. Canal completed between the Nile and the Red Sea. City of Pa-Ramesu completed.
		Menephthah.	Great attack on Egypt from the north and north-west repulsed. Friendly relations maintained with the Hittites. Expulsion of the "lepers" from Egypt according to Manetho. Reign terminates in troubles and disturbances.
		Seti II. (or Seti-Menephthah).	Crown claimed by a pretender, called Amon-mes, and afterwards by another called Siphthah. Long struggle, terminating in anarchy.
1280	Accession of the 20th Dynasty (Theban).	Set-Nekht.	
		Rameses III. (reigns 31 years).	Combined attack on Egypt of Asiatics and Europeans by land and sea from the north-east repulsed. Nations of N. Africa defeated. Syria overrun, and power of Egypt re-established as far as Carchemish. Temple of Ammon at Medinet Abou built. Commerce encouraged.
1100	Close of the 20th Dynasty	Rameses IV. to XIII.	General decline of Egypt. No wars. No great works. Scarcely any literature. The kings gradually sink into <i>fainéants</i> , and power passes into the hands of the high-priests of Ammon.

**ON THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE EXODUS AND OF THE WANDERINGS
AS FAR AS SINAI.**

The difficulties in the way of tracing the route whereby the Israelites passed from the Land of Goshen to Sinai, always considerable, have been recently much enhanced by the propounding of an entirely new line of march by a scholar of high reputation, Dr. Heinrich Brugsch.¹ It is true

¹ See a paper read before the International Congress of Orientalists in London, Sept. 17, 1874, and afterwards published under the title 'L'Exode et les Monuments Egyptiens.'

that the same theory was put forward many years ago by two other learned Germans, Messrs. Unruh and Schleiden, but their views attracted little attention, having no great local knowledge to recommend them, whereas Dr. Brugsch is probably the highest authority living on the subject of Egyptian geography, and a view which has his support cannot possibly be ignored or passed over. We must, then, commence the examination of the subject before us by discussing the theory of Dr. Brugsch, which is regarded in some quarters as "a brilliant one," and as having "at any rate *prima facie* much to recommend it."¹

Dr. Brugsch supposes that the "Rameses" from which the Israelites started (Ex. xii. 37; Num. xxxiii. 3) was the same place as Tanis or Zoan, now *San*, a large town situated on the Tanitic branch of the Nile, about lat. 31° and long. 31° 50' E. from Greenwich. He brings abundant proof to show that this town, which was rebuilt by Rameses II., was known in his reign and in that of his son, Menephthah, as Pa-Ramesu, or "the city of Rameses," that it was a place of great importance, and a common residence, if not *the* common residence, of the court at that period. Placing the Exodus, as we do ourselves, in the reign of Menephthah, he naturally concludes that the miracles of Moses and his interviews with the Egyptian king took place at this city, the only "city of Rameses" known to have existed at the time, and that it was the starting-point from which he and his company commenced their journey. In proof that he is right, he very properly adduces the statement of the psalmist, probably Asaph, that the miracles of Moses were wrought "in the field of Zoan" (Ps. lxxviii. 12, 43). These arguments are of so much weight that we, at any rate, do not care to dispute them, and we shall assume as highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that the Rameses from which the Israelites started was Zoan-Rameses, the capital city of Rameses II. and Menephthah, now marked by the extensive ruins at San-el-Hagar, which have lately been visited and described by Mr. Greville Chester.²

The children of Israel journeyed "from Rameses to Succoth" (Ex. xii. 37). Dr. Brugsch assumes the identity of this word, Succoth, with an Egyptian name, *Thuku* or *Thukot*, which he finds applied to the marshy district east and south-east of Tanis, and suggests that the place where the Israelites encamped was a certain fort, called "the barrier of Thukot," which, he says, is mentioned in papyri, and which he believes to have lain to the south-east of Tanis, halfway between that place and the modern Tel-Defneh, the ancient Daphnæ. We quite agree as to the direction in

Leipzig, 1875. An English translation of the work is appended to the 'History of Egypt,' by the same writer, translated by the late Mr. H. Danby Seymour and Mr. Philip Smith, and published by Mr. Murray, London, 1879.

¹ See an article by Mr. Greville Chester in the 'Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund,' for July, 1880, p. 134

² *Ibid* pp. 140-4

which Succoth is to be sought, since the wilderness, for which Moses was bound, lay south-east of Tanis; we demur, however, to the identification of Succoth with Thuku,¹ and we regard seven and a-half miles, which is half the distance between San and Tel-Defneh, as too short a march for the people to have made in the first freshness of their powers and the first warmth of their zeal. We should incline to double the distance, and to place Succoth at Tel-Defneh, an elevated spot of ground in a marshy district, where the cultivators of the soil would be likely to fix their "booths" of sedge and brushwood.²

The third station named in the journey of the Israelites is Etham (Ex. xiii. 20) "in the edge of the wilderness." Having identified Succoth with "the barrier of Thukot," about seven or eight miles from San, Dr. Brugsch not unnaturally places Etham at Tel-Defneh, seven or eight miles further on in the same direction. Here there was, he says, in the time of Rameses II., a "Khetam," or fort, to guard the passage of the easternmost branch of the Nile, whence (according to him) the Hebrew name, Etham. Khetam, however, with a strong guttural *kh*, is not Etham, *ḏḥm*, which commences with the light breathing, *aleph*. And Khetam, again, is not a local name, but a descriptive word, meaning "fort" or "stronghold."³ Consequently there were many Khetams, especially towards the frontier; and even granting the identity of the words, there is nothing to mark the identity of the Biblical Etham with the Khetam, or fortress, at Tel-Dafneh. We should incline to place Etham at El-Kantara, on the line of the Suez Canal, about eleven or twelve miles from Tel-Defneh, almost due east. El-Kantara is truly "in the edge of the wilderness" proper, which commences as soon as the Suez Canal is crossed; and the ruins show it to have been a place of some importance in the time of Rameses II.⁴

At Etham the Israelites were commanded to change their route. "Speak unto the children of Israel," said God to Moses, "that they *turn* and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon" (Ex. xiv. 2). Dr. Brugsch believes that the "turn" was made to the left—that from Tel-Defneh the south-east course was changed to a north-east one, and a march made which brought the Israelites close to the Mediterranean Sea at the western extremity of Lake Serbônîs. The distance to this point from Tel-Defneh, his Etham, is by the shortest route considerably over forty miles—yet Dr. Brugsch appears to regard this distance as accomplished in one day.

¹ We believe that the Egyptian *t* (*th*) never replaces the sharp Hebrew sibilant *samech*, which is the initial letter of Succoth.

² Succoth is more properly "booths" than "tents," and is so translated in Gen. xxxiii. 17; Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh. viii. 14, 16. The natives of the marsh district to this day lodge in "huts made of reeds" ('Quarterly Statement of Pal. Exp. Fund,' p. 144).

³ See Dr. Birch's 'Dictionary of Hieroglyphics,' in vol. v. of Bunsen's 'Egypt's Place,' p. 558, *ad voc.* Khetmu.

⁴ Greville Chester, in the 'Quarterly Statement' above quoted, p. 147.

Pi-hahiroth is described (Ex. xiv. 2) as "between Migdol and the sea," and as "over against Baal-zephon." Dr. Brugsch finds a Migdol some twenty miles from the western end of Lake Serbônîs, to the south-west, and conjectures that Baal-zephon was a Phœnician settlement, situated at the modern Ras Kazeroun, the ancient Mons Casius. As this place is distant from his site for Pi-hahiroth some twenty-five miles in the opposite direction from Migdol, he regards the description of Ex. xiv. 2 as sufficiently answered, and even places the three sites accordingly. Almost all other expositors have felt that the three places must have been very near together—indeed, so near that the encampment beside Pi-hahiroth (Ex. iv. 9) was regarded as "pitching before Migdol" (Num. xxxiii. 7).

We approach now the main feature of Dr. Brugsch's theory, to which all the rest is subordinate. He believes that the Israelites, having reached the shores of the Mediterranean at the point opposite the western extremity of Lake Serbônîs, found stretching before them a long tongue of land, which formed the regular road from Egypt to Palestine,¹ and that immediately, without having to wait for a miracle, they entered upon it. The Egyptians followed them. After the Hebrews, marching on foot, had successfully traversed the entire neck of land to the point where it (as he supposes) re-joined the continent, "a great wave from the Mediterranean took by surprise the Egyptian cavalry, and the captains of the war-chariots."² Thrown into disorder, their pathway obliterated, they became entangled in the soft mud of the Serbonian Lake, which was, he says, "a lagoon of weeds,"³ and thence called *Yam-Suph*—they suffered the calamity which befel the soldiers of Artaxerxes Ochus,⁴ and to which Milton alludes in 'Paradise Lost'⁵—they perished in the waters of Serbônîs.

The objections to this entire view are numerous, and of various kinds. In the first place, it gives no reason for the Pharaoh's sudden resolve to pursue the Israelites, since, instead of being "entangled in the land," they were, according to Brugsch, on the shortest and readiest road leading out of Egypt to Palestine. In the second place, it contradicts the statement⁶ that "God led them not the way of the Philistines, but led the people the way of the Yam-Suph," since it makes the way of the Philistines and the way of the Yam-Suph one and the same, and it makes God lead them out of Egypt by the way which conducted most directly to Palestine, or the country of the Philistines. Thirdly, it leaves no place for the miracle of dividing the sea (Ex. xiv. 21), since it regards the tongue of land as a regular road constantly used. Fourthly, it contradicts the natural features

¹ Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 360:—"A long tongue of land, which in ancient times formed the only road from Egypt to Palestine." This point is essential to Dr. Brugsch's theory, since he could not otherwise suppose that the Israelites would have pent themselves up in such a corner as that between the Mediterranean and Lake Serbônîs.

² *Ibid.* p. 364.

³ Book II. ll. 592—4

⁴ *Ibid.* v. 360

⁵ Diod. Sic. xvi. 46

⁶ Ex. xiii. 17

of the place, since (1) the Lake Serbônîs contains no weeds, sedge, or rushes of any kind,¹ and (2) it is, and always must be, so long as it is a lake, fed by a deep channel connecting it with the Mediterranean, so that the tongue of land is not continuous, and cannot be used as a road, unless by an army carrying pontoons, or a small company of travellers, who might be conveyed across the channel in boats. Fifthly, it assumes that the expression *Yam-Suph* is used by the writer of the Pentateuch of two quite different pieces of water, since no one can possibly deny that *Yam-Suph* in Num. xxxiii. 10, 11, is used of the Red Sea. Finally, it is in the teeth of a twofold tradition, Egyptian² and Jewish,³ which unhesitatingly made the upper end of the Red Sea the scene of the disaster.

On the destruction of the Egyptians, the Israelites, according to Dr. Brugsch, turned sharp to the south from Baal-zephon, or the Mons Casius, and entered the wilderness of Shur, now the Tih, in long. 32° 50' nearly. A recent examination of the locality has shown such a movement to have been impossible, since the Lake Serbônîs continues in an unbroken line from long. 32° 32', where it commences, to long. 33° 20', where it terminates, at a place called El Saramit.⁴ Even at this point there is no escaping from the tongue of land on which the Israelites are supposed to have entered, without crossing the channel connecting Lake Serbônîs with the Mediterranean,⁵ so that, having reached the end of the spit, the Israelites would have had no course open to them but to have turned back and retraced their steps to the supposed site of Pihahiroth.

From the Mons Casius, his Baal-zephon, Dr. Brugsch, having conducted the Israelites across a tongue of land which does not exist, makes them enter the wilderness of Shur, and travel three days in a south-west direction to Marah, which he identifies with the "Bitter Lakes." It seems to have escaped him that the distance is one of at least seventy miles, which could not certainly have been accomplished under five days, and being through an arid desert would probably have taken six. He also fails wholly to account for the extraordinary change of mind on the part of the Israelites, who, having marched out of Egypt thirty miles on the direct road to Palestine, suddenly turn round and go back to the very confines of Egypt,

¹ Greville Chester, in the 'Quarterly Statement,' p. 155 :—"The clear bright water of Lake Serbônîs is as devoid of lacustrine vegetation as the Dead Sea itself. Of it there is *no trace whatsoever*. But more, it is matter of fact that Lake Serbônîs is *almost equally devoid of marine vegetation*."

² The Egyptian tradition appears in Polyhistor, who reports the people of Memphis as maintaining that the passage of the sea was made by Moses watching the *ebb of the tide*, ('Fragm. Hist. Gr.' vol. iii. p. 223), which could only be done on the Red Sea side of Egypt, not on the side of the Mediterranean, which is tideless.

³ The Jewish tradition has never been doubted. It appears by the regular translation of *Yam-Suph* by the LXX., in every place but one where it occurs, by ἡ ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα, "the Red Sea."

⁴ Greville Chester, in the 'Quarterly Statement,' p. 154

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 157

taking a line from Etham to Marah which must have measured at least 140 miles, when the two places (according to him) were not much above thirty miles apart.

It seems needless to pursue Dr. Brugsch's theory any further. It is alike in contradiction with tradition, geography, and common sense. Its apparent foundation is a string of geographical names, supposed to be identical in the nomenclature of ancient Egypt and in that of the writer of Exodus. But on careful examination the agreement is found to be strained and forced. Only one of the Scriptural names (Migdol) really occurs upon Dr. Brugsch's line of march, and that name is of a generic character (*migdol* meaning simply "a tower"), and so likely to have been borne by more than one place.¹ The other names are either pure inventions, not found in Egyptian geography, as Baal-zapouna and Pi-hakhirot,² or names not really the same as the Hebrew, e.g. Thukot and Khetam. Common sense forbids belief in a route which involves the making of a circuit of 140 miles to reach a place thirty miles off, the performance of a six or seven days' journey in the space of three, and the assignment by one and the same writer of one and the same name to two quite different sheets of water, without any note of distinction or indication that two "seas" are meant.

Returning then to Etham, which we have placed conjecturally at El-Kantara, and which must certainly have been either there or in the neighbourhood, perhaps toward Ismailia, we have now to trace the further march from Etham to Sinai. We imagine, then, that on the command being given,—"Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon" (Ex. xvi. 2), the direction of the route was altered from east or south-east to due south—the "Bitter Lakes" were placed on the left hand, and the march continued southwards along the western shore of the Red Sea until an extensive camping-ground was reached, lying between a place called Migdol, quite distinct from the northern Migdol, and another called Pi-hahiroth, which was on or near the Red Sea. An exact location of these places is impossible, since neither in ancient nor modern geography have we any clear trace of the names,³ and the position of the northern extremity of

¹ There were two Migdols in Palestine, distinguished as Migdol-El, and Migdol-Gad. Lepsius and Stuart Poole maintain that there were at least two in Egypt. It is in favour of this contention that the northern Migdol had a descriptive epithet, being called in the Egyptian writing "the Migdol of King Seti-Menephthah" (Brugsch, 'Hist. of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 359).

² Baal-zapouna is found in the Egyptian texts as an epithet of the god Ammon, but not as the name of a place. Pi-hakhirot is not found at all, but is supposed by Dr. Brugsch to be a name that might have been given to a place situated at "the entrance of the gulfs" (*ib.* p. 363). But Jablonsky's etymology—"the place where sedge grows"—seems to be quite as probable.

³ The ancient geographers (Hecataeus, Fr. 282; 'Itin. Antonin.' p. 76, ed. Parthey) have a *Magdölus* which corresponds to the northern Egyptian Migdol: Herodotus has a *Magdölus* (ii. 159) which seems to represent Megiddo. But there is no trace of the southern Egyptian

the Gulf of Suez at the time of the Exodus is open to question. On the whole, it is perhaps most probable that the Bitter Lakes were then a portion of the Red Sea inlet,¹ being connected with it by a narrow and shallow channel, which is now dried up. We should ourselves place the passage somewhere near the present site of Suez, and we should suppose the point of landing to have been about five or six miles north of the *Ayûn Musa*, about which, for the sake of the water, the host would no doubt have encamped. To the objection that the site of Suez is too far south, since the distance from Etham, as we have now placed it, is above forty miles, which could not have been accomplished in a day, we answer that in the Scriptural narrative there is no mention of days, and that it is quite a gratuitous supposition that the number of camping-places mentioned marks the number of days spent on the journey. In point of fact only six camping-places are mentioned between Rameses and the wilderness of Sin; yet it is expressly stated that the journey took a full month (Ex. xvi. 1). We should suppose at least three days to have been occupied by the march from Etham to Pi-hahiroth.

The Red Sea crossed, and the *Ayûn Musa* reached, there was no doubt a halt of at least a day, while Moses composed his "Song," and thanksgiving was offered, and Miriam and the other women danced and sang for joy (Ex. xv. 1—21). The Israelites were then led out into "the wilderness of Shur" (*ib.* ver. 22); or, as it is elsewhere called, "the wilderness of Etham" (Num. xxxiii. 8). These names seem to have been applied, indifferently, to the whole western portion of the great desert-tract which separates Egypt from Palestine. It was called "the wilderness of Etham," because Etham lay "in its edge" (Ex. xiii. 20), at the point where it was most accessible from Egypt; and it was called "the wilderness of Shur," probably from a name, *Zor*, which the Egyptians applied to the tract within which Etham was situated.² Through this tract, or rather through the south-western portion of it, which lay along the eastern side of the Gulf of Suez, the Israelites proceeded for three entire days without finding any water (*ib.*). Travellers tell us that this is the exact character of the tract east of the Gulf from the *Ayûn Musa* to the source, called *Howarah*,³ which lies at the distance of about thirty-eight or thirty-nine miles. Most critics agree that this was the line of route pursued, and identify *Marah* (*ib.* ver. 23) with *Howarah* or its neighbourhood, which has several springs that are

Migdol. In modern geography, some low hills near Suez are said to be called *Muktala* (Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 65), which may be a reminiscence of Migdol, but points to no exact site. Of the names Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon there is no trace at all.

¹ So Canon Cook ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. p. 435), and Mr. R. Stuart Poole ('Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. iii. p. 1016).

² Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 357.

³ Robinson, 'Biblical Researches,' vol. i. pp. 91—96; Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 66; Wilson and Palmer 'Our Work in Palestine,' p. 275; etc.

remarkably "bitter."¹ We incline to agree with them, though it must be allowed that in the space of three thousand years many physical changes are likely to have occurred, and that an exact correspondence between the present condition of the country and the description of Moses is not to be expected.

The next camping-place after Marah was Elim, which means "trees" according to some critics.² Here were twelve springs of water and a grove of seventy palm-trees³ (Ex. xv. 27)—pleasing objects to the traveller who has spent three or four consecutive days in the true wilderness. Elim has been identified with three distinct sites—Wady Ghurundel, Wady Useit, and Wady Shubeikah,⁴ all of which have trees and water. They are distant from Howarah, respectively, six miles, ten miles, and sixteen miles. To us it seems that Wady Ghurundel, which would be reached first, and which is the most beautiful of the three, has the best claim of the three to represent the camping-place of Elim, the short distance from Howarah furnishing no objection now that there was no need of haste, and the abundance of shade, pasturage, and water rendering the place most attractive. We are inclined to believe that a considerable stay was made in this locality, more especially for the refreshment of the flocks and herds, which must have suffered severely during the three days' march without water.⁵

The next notice of movement which we have in Exodus is remarkably vague, and but for the light thrown upon the subject by the summary in Numbers might be misleading. "They took their journey," we are told, "from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai" (Ex. xvi. 1). From this it might have been supposed that the next encampment after Elim was in the wilderness of Sin, which must then have been looked for within twelve or fifteen miles of Wady Ghurundel. But there is no suitable tract within the distance. We find, however, by Numbers (xxxiii. 10, 11), that there was at least one encampment between Elim and the Sin desert. "They removed from Elim," it is said, "and encamped by the Red Sea;

¹ The bitterness of Ain Howarah is recognised by all travellers, from Burckhardt ('Travels in Syria,' p. 473) downwards. Winer (*Realwörterbuch*, *ad voc.* Marah) says that a still bitterer well lies east of Marah. Mention is also made of an exceedingly bitter spring south of Marah ('Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 233).

² Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 22, 508; Highton, in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. ii. p. 532, note, etc.

³ Palms are still found in these parts, both at Wady Ghurundel and Wady Useit. They are "either dwarf, i.e. trunkless, or else with savage hairy trunks and branches all dishevelled" (Stanley, p. 68).

⁴ Shubeikah is preferred by Lepsius ('Travels,' vol. i. p. 27); Useit by Laborde ('Geographical Commentary on Exodus,' xv. 27); Ghurundel, or Ghurundel together with Useit, by Dean Stanley (p. 68); Ghurundel positively by Canon Cook, the Rev. S. Clark, Kalisch, Knobel, and most others.

⁵ It is our conviction that the cattle of the Israelites rapidly decreased as they pursued their march. Many were probably killed for food; others died of thirst, or pined away from the insufficiency of the pasturage.

and they removed from the Red Sea and encamped in the wilderness of Sin." This makes it certain that Wady Ghurundel was reached at some distance inland,¹ and that after leaving it the route was deflected towards the right, and the coast of the Red Sea reached, probably either at the mouth of Wady Ethal or of Wady Shubeikah. As Wady Ethal is only ten miles from Ghurundel, and Shubeikah is less than fifteen, the latter would seem to be the more probable,² unless indeed there was more than one encampment on the sea-shore.

We have now to identify "the wilderness of Sin." Within eleven or twelve miles of the mouth of Wady Shubeikah are two tracts fairly suitable. One of these is the plain of El Markha,³ an open sandy space, about thirteen miles long by three broad, intervening between the mountains and the sea, which may be reached from Wady Shubeikah by a march along the shore in about three or four hours. The other is the Debbet er Ramleh, an inland tract, "bare, wild, and desolate,"⁴ extending about twenty-five miles from N.W.W. to S.E.E., between long. 33° 20' and 33° 40', and varying in width from two to seven miles. This tract may be reached from Wady Shubeikah by a succession of wadys, rough but practicable, in a march of about three hours. The conductors of the recent Sinai Survey Expedition, having examined both localities, are strongly of opinion that the way by the shore and El Markha is the one most likely to have been pursued by so large a body as the Israelites,⁵ and that El Markha consequently is "the wilderness of Sin," where the quails were brought and the manna was first given (Ex. xvi. 4—36). The opinion of scientific observers has so much weight, that, though some coincidences of name have been noted on the rival route,⁶ we incline to accept the line by El Markha as that which the Israelites most probably took.

From some part of the plain El Markha they must have turned inland. Three wadys lead out of it, the Wady Shellal towards the north, the Wady Feiran on the south, and the Wady Seih-Sidreh, halfway between the two. Wadys Shellal and Seih-Sidreh unite in the Wady Magharah, where the Egyptians had an important settlement for the working of the copper-mines, defended by a fortress and a garrison.⁷ It is probable that the

¹ The whole of the coast-line is arid. The wadys are entered from the shore up a steep dry incline (Stanley, p. 10), and it is not till some distance inland that vegetation is found.

² Shubeikah has trees, water, and pasturage. It is, next to Ghurundel, the most fertile of the outer wadys.

³ Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. p. 438; Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 70.

⁴ Palmer, 'Desert of the Exodus,' vol. i. pp. 232—9.

⁵ *Deblet* is said to have exactly the same meaning as *Sin* (Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. p. 436), *Dophkah* (Num. xxxiii. 12) to correspond to *Sih*, the name of a wady which communicates with the Debbet, and *Alush* to be the same as *El Esh*, another wady further on (*ibid.* pp. 437—8).

⁷ Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 65; Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. p. 433; Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 28.

Israelites would wish to avoid a collision with a disciplined force, and would therefore prefer the southern route. which, though circuitous, and said to be at the present time ill-watered, was spacious and free from enemies. Three encampments brought them to Rephidim, which, if we have correctly divined the movements of the host up to this point, must have been in the Wady Feiran, a valley declared to be "richer in water and vegetation than any other in the peninsula."¹ Here, consequently, abundant water was expected, but none was found; the watercourse was dry (Ex. xvii. 1). Hence the extreme anger of the people against Moses, followed by the miracle of bringing water out of the rock (*ib.* vers. 2—6), and soon afterwards by the battle with the Amalekites. Wady Feiran, of great value in itself on account of its fertility, was also of extreme importance as giving access to the entire group of valleys about Sinai, which formed an oasis in the stony wilderness. It has been well observed that "if the Israelites passed through Wady Feiran, it seems improbable that they should not have come into collision with the natives."² Here were "the tombs and storehouses of the Amalekites;"³ here probably was the ancient sanctuary of the nation;⁴ here certainly, and in the neighbourhood, was one of the best grazing districts, for which a nomadic horde will fight, if it fights for anything. Here, finally, is a spot fitting well the description of the battle and its attendant circumstances. "Every one who has seen the valley of Feiran will at once recognise the propriety of the 'hill' (Ex. xvii 9, 10), if applied to the rocky eminence which commands the palm-grove, and on which, in early Christian times, stood the church and palace of the bishops of Paran. Thus, if we can attach any credence to the oldest known tradition of the peninsula, that Rephidim is the same as Paran, then Rephidim, 'the resting-place,' is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the adjacent palm-grove; then the hill of the church of Paran may fairly be imagined to be "the hill" on which Moses stood, deriving its earliest consecration from the altar which he built; the Amalekites may thus have naturally fought for the oasis of the Desert and the sanctuary of their gods; and Jethro may well have found his kinsmen encamping after their long journey amongst the palms 'before the mount of God' (Serbal), and acknowledged that the Lord was greater even than all the gods who had from ancient days been thought to dwell on the lofty peaks which overhung their encampment."⁵

The Wady Feiran bifurcates at its eastern extremity, sending off the Wady esh Sheikh to the left, and to the right the Wady Solaf, both of them

¹ Highton, in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. iii. p. 1030

² Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' l.s.c.

³ Rev. F. W. Holland, quoted in the same work, vol. i. pt. i. p. 438, note ¹. (Compare Our Work in Palestine,' p. 282.)

⁴ Ritter, 'Sinai,' pp. 728-44; Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 40.

⁵ Stanley, pp. 41-2.

practicable routes, but the former the easier. It is a reasonable suggestion that both may have been utilised, and that the two portions of the congregation, reuniting where the above-mentioned wadys converge, thus entered the Wady er Rahah, "the enclosed plain in front of the magnificent cliffs of Ras Sufsáfah,"¹ which is now generally admitted to be "the wilderness of Sinai" (Ex. xix. 1), the camping-ground in which the Israelites assembled to see the Lord "come down upon Mount Sinai" (*ib.* ver. 11). The southern extremity of the mountain, once preferred by many² as the probable scene of the descent, is found to have no plain at all at its base, and no place within moderate distance at all suited for a great assembly.³ Er Rahah and Ras Sufsáfah, on the other hand, answer all the conditions. "No one," says Dean Stanley,⁴ "who has approached the Ras Sasáfah (Sufsáfah) through that noble plain, or who has looked down upon the plain from that majestic height, will willingly part with the belief that these are the two essential features of the view of the Israelite camp. That such a plain should exist at all in front of such a cliff is so remarkable a coincidence with the sacred narrative as to furnish a strong internal argument, not merely of its identity with the scene, but of the scene itself having been described by an eye-witness. The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, would have been the fittest preparation for the coming scene. The low line of alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff exactly answer [?] to the 'bounds' which were to keep the people off from 'touching the mount.' The plain itself is not broken and uneven and narrowly shut in, like almost all others in the range, but presents a long retiring sweep, against which the people could 'remove and stand afar off.' The cliff, rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of 'the mount that might be touched,' and from which the voice of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain below, widened at that point to its utmost extent by the confluence of all the contiguous valleys." The opinion here stated rests upon such solid grounds that further exploration can scarcely shake it. The latest and most scientific explorers have given to it their full adhesion. And the trigonometrical survey which these explorers made of the entire neighbourhood has converted one,⁵ who was strongly inclined to the rival view, into a zealous advocate of the opinion here set forth. Finally, the judgment of Sir Henry James, one of our best engineers, coincides with that of the

¹ Stanley, p. 42.

² As Ritter, Kalisch, Wellsted, Laborde, Strauss, and others.

³ So far as I know, this was first pointed out by Dean Stanley in 1856 ('Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 75-6). His judgment on the point was completely confirmed by the engineers who made the Ordnance Survey in 1868.

⁴ 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 42-3.

⁵ Canon Cook. (See the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. pp. 440-1.)

officers who made the survey. Sir Henry believes that "no spot in the world can be pointed out which combines in a more remarkable manner the conditions of a commanding height and of a plain in every part of which the sights and sounds described in Exodus would reach an assembled multitude of more than two million souls."¹

There would seem, therefore, to be no reasonable doubt that Sinai and its wilderness have been identified, and that the Law was given from *Ras Sufsáfah* to the people of Israel assembled in the *Wady of Er Rahah*.

LITERATURE OF EXODUS.

The Book of Exodus is so closely connected with the remainder of the Pentateuch that it has but seldom, comparatively speaking, been made the subject of distinct and separate comment. The great bulk of those who have written upon it, have been either composers of "Introductions" to the whole of the Old Testament, like Eichhorn, Bertholdt, Carpzov, Hävernicks, Keil and Delitzsch, De Wette, Jahn, Herbst, Michaelis, Bleek, and Stähelin, or writers of commentaries on the entire Pentateuch, like Vater, Knobel, Baumgarten, Marsh, Jahn (*Aechtheit des Pentateuch*), Hartmann, Fritzsche, Kalisch, and Bush. One English writer of repute, Graves, occupied somewhat narrower ground in his 'Lectures on the Last Four Books of the Pentateuch,' which in England was long reckoned among standard theological works. The volume devoted to Exodus by Kalisch, though part of a general commentary, stands on a somewhat peculiar footing, since it was written and published separately by one who viewed "Exodus" as "forming the centre of the Divine Revelation," and as being consequently "the most important volume which the human race possesses." As the comment of a Jew, a special interest attaches to this treatise, the author having certain advantages of intimate familiarity with the text and close acquaintance with Hebrew customs and ideas, which render his remarks deserving of attentive consideration.

Of comments on Exodus alone, the earliest which deserves mention is that of Rivet, entitled '*Commentarii in Exodum*,' which will be found in his *Opera Theologica*, vol. i. published at Rotterdam in 1651. After this, no contribution of much value was made towards the right understanding of the work until Rosenmüller published his '*Scholia in Exodum*' in 1822. The strictures of Von Bohlen in his '*Alte Indien*' (1835) called forth in 1840 the excellent work of Hengstenberg, entitled '*Aegypten und Moses*,' which, although containing reference to Genesis, is in the main a comment on Exodus, of great value in all that regards Egypt and the Egyptians. Thirteen years later Keil and Delitzsch commenced the publication of their great work, '*Einleitung in die Kanonischen Schriften des alten Testaments*,' by commentaries on Genesis and Exodus, which were translated into English in Clark's Edinburgh Series in the year 1864. Kalisch's '*Historical and Critical Commentary*,' which has been already mentioned, appeared within two years of that of Keil and Delitzsch, but was written apparently without any knowledge of it, and shows throughout marks of original and independent thought. It was published simultaneously in English and in German, in the year 1855. In 1857, two years later, the editors of the '*Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum alten Testament*,' published by Hirzel of Leipsic, gave to the world a still more elaborate comment than either of these, entitled '*Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus erklärt von Augustus Knobel*,' in which great and varied learning was brought to bear on the subject, and a view taken which, though rationalistic to a certain extent, was moderate in comparison with the older generation of German commentators, as De Wette, Von Lengerke, and Stähelin. Finally, in 1871, the first volume of the '*Speaker's Commentary*' contained an Introduction and Explanatory Comment on

Exodus, accompanied by additional Notes and Essays—the joint production of Canon Cook and the Rev. S. Clark, remarkable for the great knowledge of Egyptian history and of the ancient Egyptian language which it displayed—a knowledge that at once placed the principal author in the first rank of European Egyptologists.

Some good collections have been made in recent years of the Jewish commentators upon Exodus, or the Pentateuch generally. Among these the most important are 'Mechilta, der älteste halach. und hagad. Commentar z. 2. Buch Moses, von J. H. Weiss,' Wien, 1865; 'Wehishir, gesammelte, erläuterte, Midrasch- und Halachasteken z. Buche Exodus des Pentateuch, von R. Chefez Aluf,' Leipzig, 1873; and 'Der Pentateuch, mit folgenden zehn Commentatoren, Raschi, Ibn Esra, Ramban, Raschbam, Balhaturim, Sefurus, Asvi Eser, Mesoras Targum, Paschehen, und dem Commentar Nesina-la-ger von R. Nathan Adler, ferner mit Targum und Toldos Aron,' Wilna, 1876.

Important works have also been written on portions of Exodus, *e. g.* that of Bryant, entitled 'Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians,' 2nd edition, London, 1810, and that of Millington on the same subject; also Michaelis, 'Mosaisches Recht,' Frankfurt, 1775–80; and the following upon the Tabernacle—Friedrich, 'Symbolik der Mosaischen Stiftshütte,' Leipzig, 1841; and Neumann, 'Die Stiftshütte, Bild und Wort,' Gotha, 1861. Important light has also been thrown on this last-mentioned subject by Mr. James Fergusson, in Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' art. Temple.



THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

INTRODUCTORY SECTION. CHAPTERS I, II.

THE OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL IN EGYPT, WITH THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF MOSES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—6.—The Book of Exodus, being written in continuation of the history recorded in Genesis, is carefully connected with it by a recapitulation. The recapitulation involves three points:—1. The names of Jacob's children; 2. The number of Jacob's descendants who went down into Egypt; and 3. The death of Joseph. Verses 1—4 are a recapitulation of Gen. xxxv. 22–26; verse 5, of Gen. xli. 27; and verse 6, of Gen. i. 26. In no case, however, is the recapitulation exact, or (so to speak) mechanical. The "households" of verse 1 had not been mentioned previously; Joseph had not in Genesis been separated off from his brethren, as he is in verse 5; nor had the deaths of "his brethren" been recorded, much less of "all that generation." Thus there is here no "vain repetition." New facts come out in the course of the recapitulation; and the narrative advances while aiming especially at maintaining its continuity.

Ver. 1.—Now these are the names. Literally, "And these are the names." Compare Gen. xli. 8, where the phrase used is the same. We have here the first example of that almost universal practice of the writers of the Historical Scriptures to connect book

with book in the closest possible way by the simple copulative "and." (Compare Josh. i. 1, Judg. i. 1, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.) This practice, so unlike that of secular writers, can only be explained by the instinctive feeling of all, that they were contributors to a *single book*, each later writer a continuator of the narrative placed on record by his predecessor. In the Pentateuch, if we admit a single author, the initial *and* will be less remarkable, since it will merely serve to join together the different sections of a single treatise. Which came into Egypt. The next two words of the original, "with Jacob," belong properly to this clause. The whole verse is best translated, "Now these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt with Jacob: they came every man with his household." So the LXX., Pagnini, Kalisch, Geddes, Boothroyd, etc. Every man and his household. This is important in connection with the vexed question of the possible increase of the original band of so-called "Israelites" within the space of 430 years to such a number as is said to have quitted Egypt with Moses (ch. xii. 37). The "household" of Abraham comprised 318 adult males (Gen. xiv. 14). The "households" of Jacob, his eleven sons, and his numerous grown-up grandsons, have been with reason estimated at "several thousands." (Kurtz, 'History of the Old Covenant,' vol. ii p. 149, E. T.)

Vers. 2—5.—The sons of the legitimate wives Leah and Rachel are placed first, in the

order of their seniority (Gen. xxix. 32-35; xxx. 18-20; xxxv. 18); then those of the secondary wives, or concubines, also in the order of their birth (*ib.* xxx. 6-13). The order is different from that observed in Gen. xli., and seems intended to do honour to legitimate, as opposed to secondary, wedlock. The omission of Joseph follows necessarily from the exact form of the opening phrase, "These are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt with Jacob."

Ver. 5.—All the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls. This is manifestly intended as a repetition of Gen. xli. 27, and throws the reader back upon the details there adduced, which make up the exact number of "seventy souls," by the inclusion of Jacob himself, of Joseph, and of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The inaccuracy by which Jacob is counted among his own descendants, is thoroughly

Oriental and Hebraistic, however opposed to Western habits of thought. To stumble at it shows a narrow and carping spirit. (Compare note on Gen. xli. 15.) For Joseph was in Egypt already. Joseph, *i.e.*, has not been mentioned with the other sons of Jacob, since he did not "come into Egypt with Jacob," but was there previously. The transfer of the clause to the commencement of the verse, which is made by the LXX., is unnecessary.

Ver. 6.—And Joseph died. Or, "So Joseph died"—a reference to Gen. l. 26—and all his brethren. All the other actual sons of Jacob—some probably before him; some, as Levi (ch. vi. 16), after him. Joseph's "hundred and ten years" did not constitute an extreme longevity. And all that generation. All the wives of Jacob's sons, their sister Dinah, and the full-grown members of their households who accompanied them into Egypt.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-5.—*The patriarchal names.* I. THE NAMES IN THEMSELVES. Nothing seems to the ordinary reader of Holy Scripture so dry and uninteresting as a bare catalogue of names. Objections are even made to reading them as parts of Sunday or week-day "lessons." But "ALL Scripture," rightly viewed, "is profitable" (2 Tim. iii. 16). Each Hebrew name has a meaning, and was given with a purpose. What a wealth of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, surmises, triumphs, jealousies, is hid up in the list before us! Jacob, the *supplanter* (Gen. xxvii. 36); Reuben, the son of God's gracious regard (*ib.* xxix. 32); Simeon, the proof that God *hears* prayers and answers them (*ib.* ver. 33); Levi, the bond of *association* between wife and husband; Judah, he for whom God is *praised*; Issachar, the son given as a *reward*; Zebulun, he who will make the husband and wife *dwell* together; Benjamin "son of my strength," otherwise Benoni, "son of my sorrow" (*ib.* xxxv. 16); Dan, the sign that there is a God who *judges* us; Naphtali, "one *wrestled* for"; Gad, "good fortune cometh"; Asher, "the happy one"! How the private life of Jacob, how the rivalries and heats and contentions of that polygamist household, come before us, as we read the names! How again, amid all these heats and contentions, is revealed on all sides a faithful trust in God, a conviction of his overruling providence, and an acceptance of that aspect of his character which the Apostle holds up to view, when he calls him "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). Again, how strong the feeling, that, whatever cares and troubles they bring with them, children are a blessing! What a desire is shown to have children! What a pride in the possession of many children! Already "the Desire of all nations" was looked for, and each Hebrew mother hoped that in the line of descent from her might be born that Mighty One, who would "bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. iii. 15), and in whom "all the nations of the earth would be blessed" (*ib.* xii. 3; xviii. 18). Thus this list of names, if we will consider the meaning of them and the occasion of their being given, may teach us many a lesson, and prove "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

II. THE ORDER OF THE NAMES. The order in which the names are given assigns a just advantage to legitimate and true marriage over even the most strictly legal union which falls short of true marriage. Let men beware lest they forfeit God's blessing upon their domestic life, by contracting marriage in any but the most solemn way that is open to them. There is a sanctity in the relation of husband and wife, that should lead us to surround the initial contract with every sacred association and every holy form that the piety of bygone ages has provided for us.

Again, the order followed assigns a just and rightful advantage to priority of birth. Primogeniture is in a certain sense, a law of nature. The elder brother, superior in

strength, in knowledge, and experience, rightfully claims respect, submission, reverence from those younger than himself. In a properly regulated family this principle will be laid down and maintained. Age, unless by misconduct it forfeits its privilege, will be assigned the superior position; younger children will be required to submit themselves to elder ones; elder children will be upheld and encouraged to exercise a certain amount of authority over their juniors. There will be a training within the domestic circle in the habits both of direction and submission, which will prepare the way for the after discipline of life in the world.

III. THE NUMBER OF THE NAMES. Whatever minor lessons he may have intended to teach in this opening paragraph, the *main* purpose of the writer was undoubtedly to show from what small beginnings God produces the greatest, most remarkable, nay, the most astounding results. From the stock of one man and his twelve sons, with their households, God raised up, within the space of 430 years, a *nation*. Similarly, when "in the fulness of time" the New Dispensation succeeded the Old, from "the Twelve" and from "the Seventy" (Luke x. 1), the original "little flock" (*ibid.* xii. 32) was derived that "general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Heb. xii. 23) which is a "great multitude that no man can number" (Rev. vii. 9). And the growth was even more rapid. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian, in the third century after our Lord's birth, "and yet we fill all places—your cities, islands, forts, towns, villages; nay, your camps, tribes, decuries—your palace, your senate, your forum." How wonderful is such increase in either case! How clearly the consequence of Divine favour and blessing!

Ver. 5.—*Joseph in Egypt.* Exodus here points back to Genesis. So the present is always pointing back to the past. In the life of an individual, in the life of a family, in the life of a nation, there is a continuity: no past act but affects the present—no present act but affects the future. Joseph's descent into Egypt is at the root of the whole of Exodus, underlies it, forms its substratum. Without an in-coming, no out-going; and it was at Joseph's instance that his brethren had come into the country (Gen. xlv. 9—24). Or our thoughts may travel further back. "Joseph in Egypt." How had he come there? Through the envy and jealousy of brethren, provoked by the favouritism of a too fond father. Here are evils to be guarded against; here are sins to be cast out. And yet of the evil good had come: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. i. 20). "The fierceness of men he turns to his praise; and the fierceness of them he doth refrain" (Ps. lxxvi. 10). The cruel wrong done to Joseph had saved from starvation his father and his father's house, had preserved the entire people of the Egyptians from extreme suffering, and had brought Joseph himself to the highest honour. "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." He is potent to bring good out of evil, and to turn the worst calamity into the choicest blessing.

Ver. 6.—*Joseph in death with all his generation.* There are some sayings so trite that we can scarcely bring ourselves to repeat them, so vital that we do not dare to omit them. One of these is that immemorial one: "We must all die." Joseph, great as he had been, useful as his life had been to others, unspeakably precious as it had proved to his near kinsmen, when his time came, went the way of all flesh—died like any common man, and "was put in a coffin" (Gen. l. 26) and buried. So it must always be with every earthly support and stay; it fails us at last, and if it does not betray us, at any rate deserts us; suddenly it is gone, and its place knows it no more. This is always to be borne in mind; and no excessive reliance is to be placed on individuals. The Church is safe; for its Lord is always "with it," and so will be "even to the end of the world." But the men in whom from time to time it trusts are all mortal—may at any time be lost to it—may in one hour be snatched away. It is important therefore for the Church to detach itself from individuals, and to hold to two anchors—Christ and the Faith of Christ—which can never cease to exist, and can never fail it. For, when our Joseph dies, there die with him, or soon after him, "all his brethren, and all that generation." The great lights of an age are apt to go out at once, or if a few linger on, they burn with a dim lustre. And the generation that hung upon their words despairs, and knows not which

way to turn itself, until the thought comes—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Then, in resting upon Christ, it is well with us. Well, too, for each generation to remember, it will not long stay behind—it will follow its teachers. Joseph dies—his brethren die; wait a few years, and God will have taken to himself "all that generation."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—Removal to Egypt. This early instance of emigration shows—

I. How the CALL to leave the land of one's fathers may sometimes be—1. **Unexpected** Jacob little expected to end his days in Egypt. 2. **Trying.** Canaan, the land of promise, where were the graves of his ancestors, etc. 3. **Mysterious.** An apparent reversal of the lines on which Providence had hitherto been moving. Yet—4. **Distinct.** Jacob had no doubt that God's call had come to him. It came first in providence, and was ratified by direct Divine permission (Gen. xlv. 2—5). Many have the indirect call, who can scarcely doubt that it is also a direct one. Causes of emigration—Want and distress at home, with reasonable prospect of comfort and plenty abroad; opening of a better field for talents and energies; state of health, necessitating change of climate; persecution, as in case of Huguenots, Pilgrim Fathers, etc.

II. What CONSOLATIONS the emigrant may carry with him. 1. **God accompanies him** (Gen. xlv. 4). 2. **He can serve God yonder as well as here.** 3. **He is furthering wise and beneficent purposes.** Little doubt of that, if he is leaving at God's bidding. Israel's residence in Egypt secured for the tribes—(1) **A home.** (2) **Provision.** (3) **Room to grow.** (4) **Education in arts and letters.** (5) **Valuable discipline**—all preparatory to settlement in Canaan, and the fulfilment of their spiritual mission to the world. 4. **The terminus is not Egypt, but Canaan.** Jacob never saw again the Canaan he had left, but, dying in faith, he and his sons became heirs of the better Canaan. Whatever his earthly destination, let the emigrant keep in view a "better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. xi. 16).

III. The **ADVANTAGES** of emigration. 1. **It is not always advantageous.** (1) **Not always advantageous to the country left.** A country that by misgovernment, bad laws, excessive taxation, or persecution, drives its best subjects from its soil, may be compared to a man who humours an insane bent by occasionally opening a vein. (2) **Not always advantageous to the country settled in.** Emigrants may carry with them—too often do—low and immoral habits, and prove a curse, rather than a blessing, to the populations in whose midst they settle. (3) **Not always to the emigrant himself.** His step may prove to have been hasty. He may have taken it on impulse, or on insufficient information, or in a spirit of adventure. He finds when too late that a sanguine disposition has deceived him. This is to go forth without a clear call. But—2. **Emigration, wisely and judiciously conducted, is of great benefit to society.** (1) **It thins an overstocked country, and so relieves pressure on the means of subsistence.** (2) **It occupies territory needing population to develop its resources.** (3) **It affords room and scope for the vigorous expansion of a young race.** (4) **It benefits native populations.** The Egyptians would profit by the residence of the Hebrews in their midst. (5) **It may be made subservient to the diffusion of the knowledge of the true religion.** How seldom is this thought of, yet what a responsibility rests on those who leave Christian shores, carrying with them, to lands sunk in the night of heathenism, the blessed truths of Christianity! The conclusion of the matter is: Let emigration be an act of faith. Do not, in so important a step in life, lean to your own understanding. Ask guidance and clear direction from on High. But if the way is open and the call plain, then, like Jacob, go forth, and go boldly, and in faith. Trust God to be with you. He goes before you to seek you out a place to dwell in, and will surely bless you in all you put your hand to (Deut. i. 33; xv. 10).—J. O.

Vers. 1—6.—The twelve foundations. The heads of the covenant race had hitherto been single individuals. Abraham—Isaac—Jacob. The one now expands into the twelve. Glance briefly at this list of the patriarchs.

1. **THE MEN.** Here we are struck—1. *With the original unsuitness of most of these men for the position of dignity they were afterwards called to occupy.* How shall we

describe them! Recall Reuben's incest; Simeon and Levi's cruelty; Judah's lewdness; the "evil report" which Joseph brought to his father of the sons of the handmaids. The picture in the later chapters of Genesis is crowded with shadows, and it is chiefly the sins of these men which are the causes of them. Joseph is the one bright exception. The rest appear to have been men of a violent, truculent disposition, capable of selling their younger brother into Egypt, and afterwards, to screen their fault, of imposing by wilful falsehood on their aged father. Even in Benjamin, traits of character were discernible which gave ground for the tribal prediction: "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf" (Gen. xlix. 17). How unlikely that men of so ungodly a stamp, who began so ill, should end by being exalted to be patriarch-heads of a covenant nation! And neither in truth were they, till, by God's grace, a great change had passed upon them. Their crime in selling Joseph was, in a sense, their salvation. It was an act for which they never forgave themselves. Compunction wrought in them a better disposition, and laid the basis for "a train of humiliating and soul-stirring providences, tending to force on them the conviction that they were in the hands of an angry God, and to bring them to repentance of sin and amendment of life." See—(1) The natural unfitness of man for God's service; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6). (2) What the grace of God can make even of very bad men. "By grace ye are saved" (Eph. ii. 5). (3) How those whom God designs for honour in his kingdom, he first prepares for that honour. Whatever disciplines are needful for that purpose—and they may not be few—he will not withhold. 2. *With the variety of gifts and dispositions found amongst them.* This variety is taken note of in the blessings of Jacob and of Moses, and is reflected in the history. Judah is from the first a leader. He and Joseph were heads of what subsequently became the royal tribes. Reuben's impulsiveness reminds us of Peter, but he lacked Peter's underlying constancy. Levi's zeal wrought at first for evil, but afterwards for good. The other brethren were less distinguished, but, as shown by the blessings, all were gifted, and gifted diversely. Does this not teach us? (1) That God *can* use, and (2) that God *requires*, every variety of gift in his service. Hence, (3) that there is both *room* and *need* in his kingdom for all types and varieties of character—for every species of gift. A type of religion is self-condemned which cannot find room in it for the play and development of every legitimate capability of human nature. This is but to say that the goal of God's kingdom is the perfecting of humanity, not in part, but in the *totality* of its powers and functions. Grace does not suppress individuality; it develops and sanctifies it. It does not trample on gifts, but lays hold upon, transforms, and utilises them. 3. *With the existence of a law of heredity in spiritual as in natural descent.* The characteristics of the patriarchs were stamped with remarkable distinctness on the tribes which bore their names. Reuben's instability, Judah's capacity of rule, Levi's zeal, Dan's agility, Benjamin's fierceness, etc. This reappearance of ancestral characteristics in the descendants is a fact with which we are familiar, and is only explained in part by inherited organisation. Inheritance of ideas, customs, family traditions, etc., plays quite as important a part in producing the result. A law this, capable of being the vehicle of much good, but also of much evil—as potent to punish as to bless.

II. **THEIR NUMBER.** The number twelve not to be regarded as fortuitous. Twelve (3×4), the symbol of the indwelling of God in the human family, of the interpenetration of the world by the Divinity. Three, the number of the Divine; four, the number of the world. Hence, twelve tribes, twelve cakes of shewbread, twelve apostles, twelve foundations and twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. The number twelve is kept up in spite of actual departures from it in fact. The "twelve tribes" are spoken of in the days of the apostles (Acts xxvi. 17; Jas. i. 1), though, counting Levi, there were really thirteen tribes, and after the Captivity only two. It was doubtless with reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, and therefore to the number of these patriarchs, that Christ chose the twelve apostles. View the patriarchs, accordingly, as representing the covenant race, not only—1. In its natural heads, but symbolically—2. In its spiritual privilege as a people of God, and 3. In its world-wide destiny.—J. O.

Ver. 6.—*An ending.* The descent into Egypt was—1. An ending. 2. A beginning. It closed one chapter in God's providence, and opened a new one. It terminated the sojourn in Canaan; brought to a harmonious conclusion the complicated series of events

which separated Joseph from his father, raised him to power in Egypt, wrought for the purification of his brethren's character, and prepared the way for the ultimate settlement of the whole family in Goshen. It laid the foundation for new historical developments. There is now to be a pause, a breathing space, while the people are gradually multiplying, and exchanging the habits of nomadic life for those of agriculturists and dwellers in cities. The death of Joseph, and of his brethren, and of all that generation, is the proper close of this earlier period. Their part is played out, and the stage is cleared for new beginnings. 1. They died—*so must we all*. The common fate, yet infinitely pathetic when reflected on. 2. They died—*the end of earthly greatness*. Joseph had all he could wish for of earthly power and splendour, and he enjoyed it through a long lifetime. Yet he must part with it. Well for him that he had something better in prospect. 3. They died—*the end of earthly disciplines*. The lives of the brethren had been singularly eventful. By painful disciplines God had moulded them for good. Life to every one is a divinely ordained discipline. The end is to bring us to repentance, and build us up in faith and holiness. With some, the discipline succeeds; with others it fails. In either case death ends it. "After this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). The fact of discipline an argument for immortality. God does not spend a lifetime in perfecting a character, that just when the finishing touches have been put upon it, he may dash it into non-existence. Death ends discipline, but we carry with us the result and the responsibility. 4. They died—Joseph and his brethren—*happily in faith*. There was a future they did not live to see; but their faith grasped God's promise, and "Joseph, when he died . . . gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. xi. 22). And behind the earthly Canaan loomed something better—an inheritance which they and we may share together.—J. O.

Vers. 1-22.—*The prosperity of Israel*. This prosperity was not a mere appearance, nor a passing spurt of fortune. It was a deep, abiding, and significant reality. Nor was it something exaggerated in order to make an excuse for the cruelties of a suspicious tyrant. There was indeed only too much to make Pharaoh uneasy; but altogether apart from his alarms there is a plain and emphatic statement of the prosperity of Israel in ver. 7. It is a very emphatic statement indeed, summoning us in the most imperative way to a special notice of this remarkable prosperity. Let us therefore take a general view of Israel's prosperity as it is set before us in all the extent of this first chapter. Note—

I. THE INDICATIONS OF THIS PROSPERITY. The prosperity is not only plainly stated, but the chapter abounds in indications of Jehovah's favour towards Israel, and his peculiar watchfulness over it. 1. *The wonderful way in which God had brought a whole family into Egypt, and provided for their comfortable settlement in the land*. Families usually get scattered; but here are the children of Israel and children's children all kept together. The very means which they had employed in order to get rid of one of their number who was an offence to them, had ended in their being brought together more closely than ever. Joseph went before, and all unconsciously made a solid foundation for the building of their prosperity. Through all domestic jealousies, in the perils of famine, and in their journeyings between Canaan and Egypt, the Lord had preserved these twelve men so that not one of them was lacking in his contribution to the future excellency of Israel. 2. *The name by which they were described—the children of Israel*. God had said to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 28), "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel," and yet down to the end of his life he is sometimes called Jacob and sometimes Israel, as if to keep before our minds both his natural character and also his new position and privileges gained in the memorable wrestling at Peniel. These twelve men, the fathers of the tribes, were *children of Israel as well as sons of Jacob*. Jacob himself had done many things to show the meanness and corruption of fallen human nature, and his sons had been not one whit better than himself (consider the revengeful action of Simeon and Levi in Gen. xxxiv. 25; the conduct of Reuben in xxxv. 22; and especially the conduct of the brethren towards Joseph and the father who so doted upon him). But these sons of Jacob, with all their personal demerits, were also the children of him who by his sublime, persistent, courageous, and successful struggle had gained the name of Israel. It was a name to be transmitted from them to their children, full of significance, recalling a glorious experience in the past and promising a still more

glorious experience in the future. It was a name not to be forfeited even in the greatest apostasies, and perhaps its chief splendour lay in this, that it pointed forward to a still more glorious fatherhood enjoyed by those who through the gracious work of him who taught Nicodemus concerning regeneration, are permitted to say, "Now are we the children and heirs of God." 3. *The apprehensive attitude of Pharaoh.* He is a witness to the greatness of Israel's prosperity, and to the Divine and miraculous origin of it, all the more valuable because he gives his evidence unconsciously. The more we consider his unaffected alarm and his continuous and energetic efforts to crush Israel, the more we feel what a real and Divine thing Israel's prosperity was, how it was nourished by the secret and unassailable strength of God. It should be a matter of great rejoicing to God's people when the world, in its hatred, suspicion, and instinctive sense of danger, takes to the instruments of persecution, for then there is unmistakable indication of prosperity within.

II. WHEREIN THE PROSPERITY CONSISTED. It did not consist in *the accumulation of external possessions*. The Israelites might have remained comparatively few or have increased in a way such as to excite no attention. Their increase might have been in external wealth, and this would have been reckoned, by many, true prosperity. But it would not have been prosperity after a godly sort. It was the purpose of God to show in Israel how our true resources come, not from things outside of us, but from the quality of the life which he puts within. Hence the prosperity of Israel was not the result of industry, personal ability, and fortunate circumstances. It was shown by *the manifestation of a miraculous fullness of life*. The husbandman does not reckon it anything wonderful that there should be among the trees of his vineyard a certain increase of fruitfulness, corresponding to the carefulness of his cultivation. But if all at once certain trees begin to put forth a fulness of fruit altogether beyond expectation, the husbandman would not claim that such a result came from him. There is the greatest possible difference between the prosperity lying in mere external possessions and that which comes from the energy of a Divine life working in us. It needs no special help from God to make a man a millionaire. There are but few who can be such; but place them in favourable circumstances, and the immense results of their industry and attention are quite intelligible. But to produce such a result as appears in the peculiar prosperity of Israel in Egypt required a special influx of Divine energy. We have not only unmistakable indications of the prosperity of Israel; it is an equally important thing to notice that this prosperity in its peculiar character is an indication of the presence of God. He was doing what none but himself could do. Learn then that our spiritual prosperity must be something produced by God manifesting his power in our hearts. There is no chance of attributing it to our unaided industry, attention, and prudence. It is a growth more than anything else, and must show itself in the abundant and beautiful fruits of a Divine life within us.

III. A PAINFUL ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE PROSPERITY. Such prosperity as is indicated in ver. 7 could not but produce apprehension and opposition on the part of Pharaoh—inevitably assuming, as it did, the appearance of a menace to his kingdom. But it was better for Israel to go on increasing with the increase of God, even in the midst of persecutions, than to be without the persecutions on condition of being without the increase. Spiritual prosperity not only may be, but must be, accompanied with afflictions of the natural life. That is a very doubtful spirituality which manages to keep clear of all temporal troubles. They that will live godly must suffer persecution. Let us pray for spiritual prosperity, and hail its coming, and secure its stay, whatever pains be suffered and whatever lesser comforts be lost. The more the life of God is in us, the more we must expect the powers of evil to be stirred against us.—Y.

Vers. 1—7. *Tarry thou the Lord's leisure.* Introduction to the Book of Exodus. How much summed up in so few words. When men *live* history, every month seems important; when God *records* history a few sentences suffice for generations. *Man's* standpoint in the midst of the tumult is so different from God's: he "sitteth above the waterflood" and seeth "the end from the beginning" (Ps. xxix. 10; Isa. xli. 10). From God's standpoint we have here as of main consequence—

I. A LIST OF NAMES, vers. 1—5. Names of certain emigrants. More in them than seems at first sight. If I say, "William, Arthur etc., came to England at such and

such a time," not much. If I say, "William, a great warrior; Arthur, a great inventor," we feel at once that with them elements are introduced which may prove important. In these early times names are connected with the characters of the men who bear them. All these names are *significant*. Illustrate from their meaning as given in Gen. xxix., etc., and expanded in Jacob's blessing, Gen. xlix. We are supposed, too, to know something of the men from the previous history. The whole, taken together, shows us, as it were, a nation in embryo—a nation of which the characteristics were wholly different from those of the Egyptians. "Seventy souls," but—1. *Seed* souls; bound to develop through their offspring the characteristics they exhibited. 2. *United*, not isolated; a nation in embryo, not a collocation of units.

II. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BEARERS OF THE NAMES, ver. 6. All died—Joseph and all that generation. The common lot, but, from God's standpoint, the ordained method of development (John xii. 24). What wailing, as each patriarch, in his own time, passed away! Yet with each death the harvest of the future was being ever more securely sown. Death, as it were, rounds off the life; *pedestals* it; sets it where it can become exemplary. So set it becomes fruitful; the old husk drops away, and the true life-grain is enfranchised. Gad, Asher, and the rest, very ordinary men, or, if not ordinary, not very high-class men; and yet, once dead, they are rightly revered as the fathers of their tribes. Which is better, the day of death or the day of birth? The day which makes life possible for us, or the day which, by sanctifying our memory, makes that life an ennobling influence for others?

III. HOW THE DESCENDANTS PROSPERED, ver. 7. So—through the vicissitudes of life; the varieties of character; the monotony of death—God works on, slowly but certainly, to his destined end. New generations, each more numerous, succeed the old. Power and prosperity, for a time, go hand-in-hand with increased numbers—the people "waxed exceeding mighty." [The shepherd life, even in Egypt, ensured some knowledge of warfare. Goshen, the border land—cf. "the borders" in the wars with Scotland. Perhaps Joseph had purposely placed his brethren as a defence to Egypt against raids from the desert.] Families grew into tribes, and the tribes learnt their first lessons in discipline and war. Egypt, God's Aldershot—the training-ground for his armies. Canaan had to be conquered and cleared, but God could take his own time about it. When at length the hour should come, it would find his preparations perfected.

Application:—Would that man—God's child—would be content to copy his Father's methods—slow; thorough; a definite end in view; quiet, persistent preparation. No haste, no hurry, no delay (Isa. xxviii. 16).—G.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 7—14.—Here the real narrative of Exodus begins. The history of the Israelites from and after the death of Joseph is entered on. The first point touched is their rapid multiplication. The next, their falling under the dominion of a new king. The third, his mode of action under the circumstances. It is remarkable that the narrative contains no notes of time. How long the increase continued before the new king arose, how long it went on before he noticed it, how long the attempt was made to check it by mere severity of labour, we are not told. Some considerable duration of time is implied, both for the multiplication (ver. 7) and for the oppression (ver. 11—14); but the narrator is so absorbed in the matters which he has to communicate that the question what time these matters occupied does

not seem even to occur to him. And so it is with the sacred narrative frequently—perhaps we should say, generally. The chronological element is regarded as of slight importance; "A thousand years in the Lord's sight are but as yesterday"—"one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Where a profane writer would have been to the last degree definite and particular, a sacred writer is constantly vague and indeterminate. We have in the Bible nothing like an exact continuous chronology. Certain general chronological ideas may be obtained from the Bible; but in order to construct anything like a complete chronological scheme, frequent reference has to be made to profane writers and monuments, and such a scheme must be mainly dependent on these references. Archbishop

Usher's dates, inserted into the margin of so many of our Bibles, are the private speculations of an individual on the subject of mundane chronology, and must not be regarded as in any way authoritative. Their primary basis is profane history; and, though taking into consideration all the Scriptural numbers, they do not consistently follow any single rule with respect to them. Sometimes the authority of the Septuagint, sometimes that of the Hebrew text, is preferred; and the result arrived at is in a high degree uncertain and arbitrary.

Ver. 7.—The multiplication of the Israelites in Egypt from "seventy souls" to "six hundred thousand that were men" (ch. xii. 37)—a number which may fairly be said to imply a total of at least two millions—has been declared to be "impossible," and to stamp the whole narrative of Exodus with the character of unreality and romance. Manifestly, the soundness of this criticism depends entirely on two things—first, the length of time during which the stay in Egypt continued; and secondly, the sense in which the original number of the children of Israel in Egypt is said to have been "seventy souls." Now, as to the first point, there are two theories—one, basing itself on the Septuagint version of Ex. xii. 40, would make the duration of the Egyptian sojourn 215 years only; the other, following the clear and repeated statement of the Hebrew text (Ex. xii. 40, 41), literally rendered in our version, would extend the time to 430 years, or exactly double it. Much may be said on both sides of this question, and the best critics are divided with respect to it. The longer period is supported by Kalisch, Kurtz, Knobel, Winer, Ewald, Delitzsch, and Canon Cook among moderns; by Koppe, Frank, Beer, Rosenmüller, Hofmann, Tiele, Reinke, Jahn, Vater, and J. D. Michaelis among earlier critics; the short period is approved by Calvin, Grotius, Buddeus, Morinus, Voss, Houbigant, Baumgarten; and among our own countrymen, by Usher, Marsham, Geddes, and Kennicott. The point cannot be properly argued in an "exposition" like the present; but it may be remarked that both reason and authority are in favour of the simple acceptance of the words of the Hebrew text, which assign 430 years as the interval between Jacob's descent into Egypt and the deliverance under Moses.

With respect to the number of those who accompanied Jacob into Egypt, and were assigned the land of Goshen for a habitation (Gen. xlvii. 6), it is important to bear in mind, first of all, that the "seventy souls" enumerated in Gen. xlv. 8—27 comprised only two females, and that "Jacob's sons' wives"

are expressly mentioned as not included among them (*ib.* ver. 26). If we add the wives of 67 males, we shall have, for the actual family of Jacob, 137 persons. Further, it is to be borne in mind that each Israelite family which went down into Egypt was accompanied by its "household" (Ex. i. 1), consisting of at least some scores of dependants. If each son of Jacob had even 50 such retainers, and if Jacob himself had a household like that of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 14), the entire number which "went down into Egypt" would have amounted to at least 2000 persons.

According to Malthus, population tends to double itself, if there be no artificial check restraining it, every twenty-five years. At this rate, 2000 persons would expand into 2,048,000 in 250 years, 1000 would reach the same amount in 275 years, and 500 in 300 years; so that, even supposing the "seventy souls" with their "households" to have numbered no more than 500 persons when they went down into Egypt, the people would, unless artificially checked, have exceeded two millions at the expiration of three centuries—that is to say, 130 years before the Exodus! No doubt, the artificial checks which keep down the natural tendency of population to increase began to tell upon them considerably before that time. The "land of Goshen," a broad tract of very fertile country, became tolerably thickly peopled, and the rate of increase gradually subsided. Still, as the Delta was a space of from 7000 to 8000 square miles, and the land of Goshen was probably about half of it, a population of two millions is very much what we should expect, being at the rate of from 500 to 600 persons to the square mile.

It is an interesting question whether the Egyptian remains do, or do not, contain any mention of the Hebrew sojourn; and if they do, whether any light is thereby thrown on these numbers. Now it is admitted on all hands that, about the time of the Hebrew sojourn, there was in Egypt a subject race, often employed in forced labours, called *Aperu* or *Aperiu*, and it seems impossible to deny that this word is a very fair Egyptian equivalent for the Biblical עֲבָדִים, "Hebrews." We are forced, therefore, either to suppose that there were in Egypt, at one and the same time, two subject races with names almost identical, or to admit the identification of the *Aperu* with the descendants of Jacob. The exact numbers of the *Aperu* are nowhere mentioned; but it is a calculation of Dr. Brugsch that under Rameses II., a little before the Exodus, the foreign races in Egypt, of whom the *Aperu* were beyond all doubt the chief, "amounted certainly to a third, and probably still more," of the whole population ('History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 100, E. T.), which is usually reckoned at from 7,000,000 to 8,000,000

One-third of this number would be from 2,300,000 to 2,600,000.

The writer of Exodus does not, however, as yet, make anything like a definite calculation. He is merely bent on having it understood that there had been a *great* multiplication, and that the "family" had grown into a "nation." To emphasise his statement, he uses four nearly synonymous verbs ("were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed-mighty"), adding to the last a duplicated adverb, *bim'od m'od*, "much, much." Clearly, an astonishing increase is intended.

Ver. 8.—There arose up a new king. It is asked, Does this mean merely another king, or a *completely different* king, one of a new dynasty or a new family, not bound by precedent, but free to adopt and likely to adopt quite new principles of government? The latter seems the more probable supposition; but it is probable only, not certain. Assuming it to be what is really meant, we have to ask, What changes of dynasty fall within the probable period of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, and to which of them is it most likely that allusion is here made? Some writers (as Kalisch) have supposed the Hyksôs dynasty to be meant, and the "new king" to be Set, or Salatis, the first of the Hyksôs rulers. But the date of Salatis appears to us too early. If Joseph was, as we suppose, the minister of Apophis, the last Hyksôs king, two changes of dynasty only can come into consideration—that which took place about B.C. 1700 (or, according to some, B.C. 1600), when the Hyksôs were expelled; and that which followed about three centuries later, when the eighteenth dynasty was superseded by the nineteenth. To us it seems that the former of these occasions, though in many respects suitable, is (a) too near the going down into Egypt to allow time for the multiplication which evidently took place before this king arose (see ver. 7), and (b) unsuitable from the circumstance that the first king of this dynasty was not a builder of new cities (see ver. 11), but only a repairer of temples. We therefore conclude that the "new king" was either Rameses I., the founder of the nineteenth dynasty, or Seti I., his son, who within little more than a year succeeded him. It is evident that this view receives much confirmation from the name of one of the cities built for the king by the Hebrews, which was Raameses, or Rameses, a name now appearing for the first time in the Egyptian dynastic lists.

Who knew not Joseph. Who not only had no personal knowledge of Joseph, but was wholly ignorant of his history. At the distance of from two to three centuries the benefits conferred by Joseph upon Egypt, more especially as they were conferred under a foreign and hated dynasty, were forgotten.

Ver. 9.—And he said unto his people,

Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Literally, "great and strong in comparison with us." Actual numerical superiority is not, perhaps, meant; yet the expression is no doubt an exaggerated one, beyond the truth—the sort of exaggeration in which unprincipled persons indulge when they would justify themselves for taking an extreme and unusual course.

Ver. 10.—Come on. The "Come then" of Kalisch is better. Let us deal wisely. "The children of this world are in their generation *wiser* than the children of light." Severe grinding labour has often been used as a means of keeping down the aspirations of a people, if not of actually diminishing their numbers, and has been found to answer. Aristotle (Pol. v. 9) ascribes to this motive the building of the Pyramids and the great works of Polycrates of Samos, Pisistratus of Athens, and the Cypselidæ of Corinth. The constructions of the last Tarquin are thought to have had the same object (Liv. i. 56; Niebuhr, 'Roman History,' vol. i. p. 479). Lest, when there falleth out any war, they join also to our enemies. At the accession of the nineteenth dynasty, though there was peace, war threatened. While the Egyptians, under the later monarchs of the eighteenth dynasty, had been quarrelling among themselves, a great nation upon their borders "had been growing up to an importance and power which began to endanger the Egyptian supremacy in Western Asia" (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 2). Both Rameses I. and his son Seti had almost immediately after their accession to engage in a war, which was rather defensive than offensive, with the Khita, or Hittites, who were the great power of Syria (*ib.* pp. 9, 15, 16). At the commencement of his reign, Seti may well have feared a renewed invasion like that of the Hyksôs, which would no doubt have been greatly helped by a rising of the Israelites. And so get them up out of the land. Literally, "And go up out of the land." The Pharaoh already fears that the Israelites will quit Egypt. As men of peaceful and industrious habits, and in some cases of considerable wealth (Joseph, 'Ant. Jud.' ii. 9, § 1), they at once increased the strength of Egypt and the revenue of the monarch. Egypt was always ready to receive refugees, and loth to lose them. We find in a treaty made by Rameses II., the son of Seti, with the Hittites, a proviso that any Egyptian subjects who quit the country, and transfer themselves to the dominion of the Hittite king, shall be sent back to Egypt ('Records of the Past,' vol. iv. p. 30).

Ver. 11.—They did set over them task-masters. Literally, "lords of tribute," or "lords of service." The term used, *sarey massim*, is the Egyptian official title for overlookers of forced labour. It occurs in this

sense on the monument representing brick-making, which has been supposed by some to be a picture of the Hebrews at work. (See Cook, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. i. p. 253, and compare Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 376.) To afflict them with their burdens. Among the tasks set the labourers in the representation above alluded to are the carrying of huge lumps of clay and of water-jars on one shoulder, and also the conveyance of bricks from place to place by means of a yoke. They built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raameses. By "treasure-cities" we are to understand "store-cities," or "cities of store," as the same word is translated in 1 K. ix. 19 and 2 Chr. viii. 4. Such cities contained depots of provisions and magazines of arms. They were generally to be found on all assailable frontiers in ancient as in modern times. (Compare 2 Chr. xi. 5, 12; xxxiii. 28, etc.) Of the cities here mentioned, which the Israelites are said to have "built," or helped to build, Pithom is in all probability the Patumos of Herodotus (ii. 158), which was not far from Bubastis, now Tel-Basta. Its exact site is uncertain, but if identical with the Thon, or Thoum, of the 'Itinerary of Antonine,' it must have lain north of the Canal of Necho, not south, where most maps place it. The word means "abode of the sun," or rather "of the setting sun," called by the Egyptians Tum, or Atum. Names formed on the model were very common under the nineteenth dynasty, Rameses II. having built a Pa-Ra, a Pa-Ammon, and a Pa-Phthah in Nubia (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 90). Pa-Tum itself has not been found among the cities of this period (*ib.* p. 99), but appears in the records of the twentieth dynasty as a place where the Setting-Sun god had a treasury ('Records of the Past,' vol. vi. p. 54). The name Raameses is probably put for Pa-Rameses (as Thum for Pa-Tum), a city frequently mentioned in the inscriptions of the nineteenth dynasty, and particularly favoured by Rameses II., whose city it was especially called ('Records of the Past,' vol. ii. p. 77; vol. vi. p. 13), and by whom it was greatly enlarged, if not wholly built. We incline to believe that the building was commenced by Seti, who named the place, as he did his great temple, the Ramesseum, after his father. The city was, according to Brugsch, a sort of suburb of Tanis ('History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 94). It was a magnificent place, and under Rameses II. and his son Menephthah was the ordinary residence of the court. Hence the miracles of Moses are said to have been wrought "in the field of Zoan," *i.e.* the country about Tanis (Ps. lxxviii. 12, 43).

Ver. 12.—They were grieved because of the children of Israel. The word grieved very insufficiently renders the Hebrew verb,

which "expresses a mixture of loathing and alarm" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. pt. 1, p. 251). Kalisch translates forcibly, if inelegantly—"They had a horror of the children of Israel."

Ver. 13.—The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. The word translated rigour is a very rare one. It is derived from a root which means "to break in pieces, to crush." The "rigour" would be shown especially in the free use of the stick by the taskmaster, and in the prolongation of the hours of work.

Ver. 14.—They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick. While stone was the material chiefly employed by the Egyptians for their grand edifices, temples, palaces, treasures, and the like, brick was also made use of to a large extent for inferior buildings, for tombs, dwelling-houses, walls of towns, forts, enclosures of temples, etc. There are examples of its employment in pyramids (Herod. ii. 136; Vyse, 'Pyramids of Gizeh,' vol. iii. pp. 57—71); but only at a time long anterior to the nineteenth and even to the eighteenth dynasty. If the Pharaoh of the present passage was Seti I., the bricks made may have been destined in the main for that great wall which he commenced, but did not live to complete, between Pelusium and Heliopolis, which was to secure his eastern frontier (Birch, 'Egypt from the Earliest Times,' p. 125). All manner of labour in the field. The Israelitish colony was originally employed to a large extent in tending the royal flocks and herds (Gen. xlvii. 6). At a later date many of them were engaged in agricultural operations (Deut. xi. 10). These, in Egypt, are in some respects light, *e.g.* preparing the land and ploughing, whence the remark of Herodotus (ii. 14); but in other respects exceedingly heavy. There is no country where care and labour are so constantly needed during the whole of the year. The inundation necessitates extreme watchfulness, to save cattle, to prevent the houses and the farmyards from being inundated, and the embankments from being washed away. The cultivation is continuous throughout the whole of the year; and success depends upon a system of irrigation that requires constant labour and unremitting attention. If the "labour in the field" included, as Josephus supposed (*i.s.c.*), the cutting of canals, their lives would indeed have been "made bitter." There is no such exhausting toil as that of working under the hot Egyptian sun, with the feet in water, in an open cutting, where there can be no shade, and scarcely a breath of air, from sunrise to sunset, as forced labourers are generally required to do. Mehemet Ali lost 20,000 labourers out of 150,000 in the construction of the Alexandrian Canal towards the middle of the present century.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 7 and 12.—*God the Protector of his people.* I. THE MULTIPLICATION OF ISRAEL. All increase is of God, and comes to man by his blessing. As he gave the original command, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. i. 28), so he in every case gives the new lives by which the earth is replenished. "Children, and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord" (Ps. cxxviii. 3). He gives or withholds offspring as he pleases; enlarges families, tribes, nations, or causes them to decline, decay, and die out. Increase is a sign of his favour—1. To the individual—"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. cxxviii. 5); 2. To the nation—"I will multiply them and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them and they shall not be small" (Jer. xxx. 19); and 3. To churches—"Walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they were multiplied" (Acts ix. 31). A nation or church that increases has, so far at any rate, a sign of God's approval of it, of his favour, of his having in his eternal counsels work for it to do for him in the present and the future. One which dwindles has, on the contrary, a note of God's disapproval—at the very least, a warning that all is not with it as it should be. Nations, when they can no longer do God service, die out; churches, when they become effete and useless, have their candlesticks removed (Rev. ii. 5).

II. EFFECT OF PERSECUTION ON IT. Note, that the effect of persecution was the very opposite of what was intended. *The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.* So is it ever with God's people. Persecutions always "fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel" (Phil. i. 12). "They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch preaching the word" (Acts xi. 19). Persecution brought Paul to Rome, and enabled him to proclaim the Gospel and make many converts in the very citadel of Satan, the headquarters of the enemy. So marked was the prevalence of the law, that among the early Christians it became a proverb, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." After each of the ten great Imperial persecutions, the Church was found within a brief space to be more numerous than ever. And so it will be to the end. "The gates of Hell" cannot prevail against the Church. Out of the last and greatest of all the persecutions, when Antichrist shall be revealed, the Church will issue triumphant, a "great multitude, which no man can number" (Rev. vii. 9).

Ver. 8.—*Joseph forgotten.* "The evil that men do lives after them—the good is oft interred with their bones." Had Joseph been a tyrant, a conqueror, an egotist who crushed down the Egyptians by servile toil for the purpose of raising a huge monument to his own glory, he would no doubt have remained fresh in the memory of the nation, and his name and acts would have been familiar even to a "new king," who was yet an Egyptian and an educated man. But as he had only been a benefactor of the nation, and especially of the kings (Gen. xlvii. 20—26), he was utterly forgotten—as some think, within sixty-five years of his death, but according to our calculations, not till about 275 years after it. This is about the space that separates us from Queen Elizabeth, who is certainly not forgotten, as neither are her ministers. So Christian nations would seem to have better memories than heathen ones. In time, however, every man is forgotten; and Christians should therefore not make their object the praise of men, or posthumous fame, but the praise and approval of God, which will continue for ever. "God is not unrighteous to forget" (Heb. vi. 10).

Vers. 10—12.—*The wisdom of the wise brought to nought.* God is wont to "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. i. 19). He "makes the devices of the people of none effect" (Ps. xxxiii. 10). Humanly speaking, the Pharaoh had done "wisely," had counselled well: many a people has been crushed utterly under the yoke of an oppressor, ground down by hard labour—even after a time well-nigh exterminated. It was a clever and crafty plan to avoid the risk and discredit of a massacre of unoffending subjects, and at the same time to gain advantage by their heavy labours while effectually

thinning their ranks through the severity of the toils imposed on them. Unless God had interfered, and by his secret help supported and sustained his people; enabled them to retain their health and strength under the adverse circumstances; induced them, bitter and hopeless as their lot seemed, still to contract marriages, and blessed those marriages, not only with offspring, but with superabundant offspring (see verses 12 and 20)—the result anticipated would without doubt have followed: the multiplication of the people would have been checked—their numbers would soon have begun to diminish. But God had determined that so it should not be. He had promised Abraham an extraordinary increase in the number of his descendants, and was not going to permit a cruel and crafty king to interfere with the carrying out of his designs, the performance of his gracious promises. So the more that Pharaoh and his obsequious subjects afflicted them, “the more they multiplied and grew”—“the little one became a thousand, and the small one a strong nation”—the Lord “hastened it in his time” (Is. lx. 22). Christians therefore need never fear the devices of their enemies, however politic they may seem. God has the power, and if he sees fit will exert it, to turn the wisdom of the world into foolishness, to upset all human calculations, confound all prudent counsels, and make each act done in opposition to his will help to work it out. In Israel’s case, the hard labour and unceasing toil which made their lives bitter (ver. 14), was at once needed to wean their minds from the recollection of the “fleshpots” and other delights of Egypt, and so make them content to quit it; and also it was required to brace them for the severe life of the wilderness—the hard fare, the scant water, the scorching heat by day, the chill dews at night; to harden their frames, relaxed by a time of sensual indulgence (ch. xvi. 3), and nerve their minds to endurance.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 7—11.—*A multiplying people and a king’s fears.* The increase of Israel in Egypt excited Pharaoh’s jealousy. They were a useful people, and he dreaded their departure (ver. 10). But their staying was almost equally an occasion of uneasiness. Their position in Lower Egypt, so near the frontier, made them dangerous in case of wars. Revolutions were not infrequent, and many things were less likely than a future Hebrew dynasty. Hence the policy of breaking their power, and checking their increase, by reducing them to servitude.

I. VIEW ISRAEL’S INCREASE AS A WORK OF DIVINE POWER. While—1. Natural—that is, not miraculous, but due to the superabundant blessing of God on ordinary means—it was yet, 2. Extraordinary, and 3. Invincible—defying the efforts of the tyrant to check it. It may be legitimately viewed as a type of the spiritual increase of the Church. This also—1. *Excites astonishment.* So great a fruitfulness had never before been known. It was a marvel to all who witnessed it. Like surprise is awakened by the facts of the history of the Church. Consider (1) The smallness of the Church’s beginnings. (2) The rapidity of her growth. (3) What opposition she has encountered. (4) What efforts have been made to crush her. (5) How she survives, and has from time to time renewed her youth. (6) How she has even thriven in the fires of persecution. (7) How, notwithstanding formidable resistance, and great internal lukewarmness and corruption, her progress is being steadily maintained. 2. *Awakens jealousy and fear.* The world does not relish the progress of the Gospel. It resents it as full of danger to itself. The filling of the land with sincere believers would mean the downfall of its power. Its spirit shown in opposition to revivals of religion, in decriing missions, in anger at bold and fearless preaching of Christ, followed by saving results, &c. 3. *Can only be accounted for by ascribing it to God as its author.* Naturalistic explanations have been offered. Gibbon has enumerated “secondary causes.” So “secondary causes” might be pointed to in explaining the increase of Israel, yet these alone would not account for it. There was implied a Divine power, imparting to ordinary means an extraordinary efficacy. As little can the success of Christianity be explained on grounds of mere naturalism. 1. The Bible attributes it to Divine efficiency. 2. Those who experience its power unhesitatingly trace it to this source. 3. The Church is successful only as she relies on Divine assistance. 4. Naturalistic theories, one and all, break down in their attempts at explanation. Each new one that appears finds itself on

the failure of its predecessors. It, in turn, is exploded by a rival. The supernatural hypothesis is the only one which accounts for all the facts.

II. VIEW PHARAOH'S POLICY AS A TYPE OF WORLDLY POLICY GENERALLY. Leave it to describe itself, and it is—1. Far-seeing. 2. Politic. 3. Unsentimental. Napoleon was unsentimental: "What are a hundred thousand lives, more or less, to me!" 4. A necessity of the time. Describe it as it ought to be described, and it appears in a less favourable light. 1. Ever awake to selfish interests. 2. Acute to perceive (or imagine) danger. 3. Unrestrained by considerations of gratitude. The new king "knew not Joseph." Nations, like individuals, are often forgetful of their greatest benefactors. 4. Regardless of the rights of others. 5. Cruel—stops at nothing. It will, with Pharaoh, reduce a nation to slavery; or, with Napoleon, deluge continents with blood. Yet—5. Is essentially short-sighted. All worldly policy is so. The King of Egypt could not have taken a more effectual means of bringing about the evils that he dreaded. He made it certain, if it was uncertain before, that in the event of war, the Hebrews would take part with his enemies. He set in motion a train of causes, which, as it actually happened, led to the departure of the whole people from Egypt. His policy thus outwitted itself, proved suicidal, proclaimed itself to be folly. Learn—1. The folly of trusting in man. "Beware of men" (Matt. x. 17). 2. How futile man's wisdom and cunning are when matched against God's power. 3. The short-sightedness of selfish and cruel action.—J. O.

Vers. 11-14.—*The bondage.* I. How EFFECTED? Doubtless, partly by craft, and partly by force. To one in Pharaoh's position, where there was the will to enslave, there would soon be found the way. 1. *The Israelites were politically weak.* "The patriarchal family had grown into a horde; it must have lost its domestic character, yet it had no polity . . . a people in this state was ripe for slavery" (Maurice). 2. *And Pharaoh had no scruples.* Those engaged in tillage and keeping of cattle could easily be ruined by heaping on them tributes and exactions. Liberty once forfeited, they were at Pharaoh's disposal, to do with as he listed. Of the rest, large numbers were probably already employed—as forced labourers—on Pharaoh's works of construction. Over these (ver. 11) it was proposed to set "taskmasters"—"chiefs of tribute"—to afflict them with their burdens. 3. *Complaint was useless.* The Hebrews soon found, as expressed afterwards (ch. v. 19), that they were "in evil case"—that a general conspiracy, from the king downwards, had been entered into to rob, injure, and oppress them. Their subjugation in these circumstances was easily accomplished. Learn—1. A nation may outgrow itself. It will do so if intelligence and morals, with suitable institutions, do not keep pace with numbers. 2. Great prosperity is not always an advantage. It (1) excites jealousy; (2) tempts cupidity; (3) usually weakens by enervating.

II. WHY PERMITTED? This question may be answered by viewing the bondage 1. *As a punishment for sins.* The Hebrews had doubtless greatly corrupted themselves in Egypt, and had become in their masses very like the people around them. This was in them a sin that could not pass unpunished. God cannot suspend his moral laws even for his own people. If they do wrong, they must, no less than others, suffer for it. Nay, they will be punished with even greater severity than others are for similar offences. It is this which explains the bitter servitude of Israel. The nation is allowed to sink into a condition which is at once a fit retribution for its own sin, and an apt image of the condition of the sinner generally. For sin is slavery. It is inward bondage. It is degradation. It is rigorous service, and bitterness, and misery. God's law, the soul's own lusts, an exacting world, become in different ways taskmasters. It is unprofitable service. It sends a man to the husks, to the swine-troughs. It is slavery from which nothing but the power of God Almighty can redeem us. We bless God for our greater Moses, and the grander Exodus. 2. *As a trial of faith.* It would be so in a very especial degree to the godly portion of Israel. For why this long hiding of God's face—this keeping silence while his people were broiling and perishing under their terrible tasks? Did it not seem as though the promise had failed and God had forgotten to be gracious? (Ps. lxxvii. 8, 9.) Truly we need not wonder at anything in God's dealings with his Church when we reflect on how long and how fearfully Israel was afflicted. The faith which endured *this* trial must have come out of the furnace

seven times purified. 3. *As a moral preparation.* It is now manifest, though it could hardly have been seen then, how needful was this affliction, protracted through successive generations—(1) To wean the people's hearts from Egypt. (2) To make them willing to leave it. (3) To make the thought of Canaan sweet to them. (4) To break up trust in self and man. (5) To lead them to cry mightily to God. The same reasons, in whole or part, serve to explain why God lays trials on ourselves; indicate at least the ends which affliction is used to subserve. Had everything been prosperous, the hearts of Israel would naturally have clung to the fleshpots; their hopes would have been forgotten; even their God would in time have been abjured.—J. O.

Vers. 7—14.—*Israel in Egypt.* The life of a people, like that of an individual, to a great extent shaped by circumstances. In Canaan the Israelites might learn hardihood, but no room for much growth; few opportunities for national organisation; the tendency would be for the families to separate, each seeking pasturage for its own flocks (cf. Abraham and Lot). To become a nation they had to be placed (1) where they might increase and multiply, and (2) where their slightly connected elements might coalesce and be welded into one. To attain this object God led his people into Egypt. [Cf. (1) Hothouse where plants may strike and grow before being planted out, and (2) Deut. iv. 20. Furnace where metal may be smelted into one homogeneous mass and the worst of the dross removed.] We may notice in this view—

I. PROSPERITY AND ITS USES. Cf. ver. 7. In Goshen life simple and the means of subsistence plentiful, ample room and ample provision. Happy years without a history, passed in a land which even now yields the largest revenue in Egypt, and where the population still increases more rapidly than in any other province. Probably no incident of more importance than some occasional skirmish with border tribes. No wonder that "they increased abundantly and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty."

Prosperity has its uses as well as adversity. The long unnoticed years through which the fruit-tree attains maturity are necessary antecedents to the fiery summers which see the fruit ripening. Not much to notice in such years. Still their existence is noteworthy. They make no small portion of the sum of human life, whether viewed in its national or individual aspect. History grows out of them even whilst it is compelled to forget them in its records. The fruit of Life draws from them its substance, though other years may give it its colour and flavour.

II. ADVERSITY AND ITS USES. Vers. 10—14 show how trouble came to Israel, and the nature of the trouble which did come. Originating in Pharaoh's natural jealousy at the increasing influence of an alien race, it took the form of enforced labour, such as—perhaps owing to Joseph's land law (Gen. xlvii. 23, &c.)—he clearly had the acknowledged right to levy at will from all his subjects. Pharaoh however was but the instrument which God used for the education of his people; he knew that adversity was needed to carry on the work which prosperity had begun. Notice—1. *Affliction did not hinder progress.* We gather from ver. 12 that it really advanced it. Prosperity long continued may be a greater hindrance than adversity. It tends to produce a stagnant condition [cf. the opening poems in Tennyson's 'Maud']. The after-history shows us that Israel had, to some extent, *morally* deteriorated; and moral deterioration in the long run must lead to physical degradation. When the stock needs pruning the pruning process stimulates growth. 2. *Affliction proved morally helpful.* The people had been getting careless and slothful, forgetting God (cf. Josh. xxiv. 14, Ezek. xx. 5—8) or paying him a merely nominal service. Now, however, cf. ii. 23—25, God could hear their cry because their cry was genuine; he could have respect unto them because they were learning to have respect unto him. 3. *Affliction ensured national union.* Hitherto the people was just a collection of families, united by a common name and common traditions. Mutual need begets mutual helpfulness, and it is by mutual help that tribes are dovetailed into one another and come to form one nation. [Isolated fragments of ore need smelting in the furnace to produce the consolidated metal.] It is in the heat of the furnace of affliction that rivalries, jealousies, and all kinds of tribal littlenesses can alone be finally dissolved. And affliction still has such uses. Prosperity is good, no doubt, but, in this world, it requires to be complemented by adversity. "Why is trouble permitted?" Because men cannot otherwise be perfected. It is just as necessary for our moral ripening as

heat is necessary for the ripening of the fruit. (1) It need not hinder any man's progress; (2) If rightly used it should purge out the dross from us and make us morally better; (3) It tends to dissolve the barriers which selfishness erects between man and man, and works towards the formation of that holy brotherhood which embraces in one family all the nations of the earth.—G.

Vers. 8—14.—*Egypt's sin.* I. NATIONAL WRONG-DOING THE SEED OF NATIONAL DISASTER. The story of Egypt's suffering begins with the story of Egypt's injustice. There was wisdom in Pharaoh's statesmanship, and a sincere desire to serve his country, and yet he was his country's worst foe. The service rendered by wickedness is in the end rebuke and ruin.

II. THE CARE SOUGHT TO BE REMOVED BY SIN BECOMES GREATER (10—12). 1. The bondage was imposed to prevent their multiplying: "but the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew." 2. The trouble was at first simply a possibility detected by the statesman's keen eye, and now all Egypt was "grieved because of the children of Israel." The way of wickedness is through a deepening flood.

III. WRONG GROWS INTO GREATER WRONG (13, 14). Egypt had gone too far to retreat. Israel's enmity was now a certainty, and they must be crushed. From being compelled to labour in the erection of strong cities, their lives are made bitter by all manner of hard bondage. Evil grows with an inward necessity. When a nation makes an unjust demand it does not mean murder, yet that is its next step. Satan dare not whisper all his counsel at first but by-and-by he can tell it all and have it all accomplished.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 15—22.—Some time—say five or six years—having elapsed and the Pharaoh's first plan having manifestly failed, it was necessary for him either to give up his purpose, or to devise something else. Persevering and tenacious, he preferred the latter course. He bethought himself that a stop might be put to the multiplication of the Israelites by means of infanticide on a large scale. Infanticide was no doubt a crime in Egypt, as in most countries except Rome; but the royal command would legitimate almost any action, since the king was recognised as a god; and the wrongs of a foreign and subject race would not sensibly move the Egyptian people, or be likely to provoke remonstrance. On looking about for suitable instruments to carry out his design, it struck the monarch that something, at any rate, might be done by means of the midwives who attended the Hebrew women in their confinements. It has been supposed that the two mentioned, Shiprah and Puah, might be the only midwives employed by the Israelites (Canon Cook and others), and no doubt in the East a small number suffice for a large population: but what impression could the monarch expect to make on a population of from one to two millions of souls by engaging the services of two persons only, who could not possibly attend more than about one in fifty of the

births? The midwives mentioned must therefore be regarded as "superintendents," chiefs of the guild or faculty, who were expected to give their orders to the rest. (So Kalisch, Knobel, Aben Ezra, etc.) It was no doubt well known that midwives were not always called in; but the king supposed that they were employed sufficiently often for the execution of his orders to produce an important result. And the narrative implies that he had not miscalculated. It was the disobedience of the midwives (ver. 17) that frustrated the king's intention, not any inherent weakness in his plan. The midwives, while professing the intention of carrying out the orders given them, in reality killed none of the infants; and, when taxed by the Pharaoh with disobedience, made an untrue excuse (ver. 19). Thus the king's second plan failed as completely as his first—"the people" still "multiplied and waxed very mighty" (ver. 20).

Foiled a second time, the wicked king threw off all reserve and all attempt at concealment. If the midwives will not stain their hands with murder at his secret command, he will make the order a general and public one. "All his people" shall be commanded to put their hand to the business, and to assist in the massacre of the innocents—it shall be the duty of every loyal subject to cast into the waters of the Nile any

Hebrew male child of whose birth he has cognisance. The object is a national one—to secure the public safety (see ver. 10): the whole nation may well be called upon to aid in carrying it out.

Ver. 15.—The Hebrew midwives. It is questioned whether the midwives were really Hebrew women, and not rather Egyptian women, whose special business it was to attend the Hebrew women in their labours. Kalisch translates, “the women who served as midwives to the Hebrews,” and assumes that they were Egyptians. (So also Canon Cook.) But the names are apparently Semitic, Shiprah being “elegant, beautiful,” and Puah, “one who cries out.” And the most natural rendering of the Hebrew text is that of A. V.

Ver. 16.—The stools. The explanation furnished by a remark of Mr. Lane (*Modern Egyptians*, vol. iii. p. 142) is more satisfactory than any other. In modern Egypt, he says, “two or three days before the expected time of delivery, the midwife conveys to the house the *kursee elwildeh*, a chair of a peculiar form, upon which the patient is to be seated during the birth.” A chair of the form intended is represented on the Egyptian monuments.

Ver. 17.—The midwives feared God. The midwives had a sense of religion, feared God sufficiently to decline imbruing their hands in the innocent blood of a number of defenceless infants, and, rather than do so wicked a thing, risked being punished by the monarch. They were not, as appears by ver. 19, *highly* religious—not of the stuff whereof martyrs are made; they did not scruple at a falsehood, believing it necessary to save their lives; and it would seem that they succeeded in deceiving the king.

Ver. 19.—They are vigorous. Literally, “they are lively.” In the East at the present day a large proportion of the women deliver themselves; and the services of professional accoucheurs are very rarely called in. The excuse of the midwives had thus a basis of fact to rest upon, and was only untrue because it was not the whole truth.

Vers. 20, 21.—Therefore God did well to the midwives. Literally, “And God did well,” etc. (see ver. 21). Because they feared him sufficiently to disobey the king, and take their chance of a punishment, which might have been very severe—even perhaps death—God overlooked their weak and unfaithful divergence from truth, and gave them a reward.

He made them houses. He blessed them by giving them children of their own, who grew up, and gave them the comfort, support, and happiness which children were intended to give. There was a manifest fitness in rewarding those who had refused to bring misery and desolation into families by granting them domestic happiness themselves.

Ver. 22.—Every son that is born. The words are universal, and might seem to apply to the Egyptian, no less than the Hebrew, male children. But they are really limited by the context, which shows that there had never been any question as to taking the life of any Egyptian. With respect to the objection sometimes raised, that no Egyptian monarch would possibly have commanded such wholesale cold-blooded destruction of poor innocent harmless children, it is to be observed, first, that Egyptian monarchs had very little regard indeed for the lives of any persons who were not of their own nation. They constantly massacred prisoners taken in war—they put to death or enslaved persons cast upon their coasts (Diod. Sic. i. 67)—they cemented with the blood of their captives, as Lenormant says (*Manuel d'Hist. Anc.*, vol. i. p. 423), each stone of their edifices. The sacredness of human life was not a principle with them. Secondly, that tender and compassionate regard for children which seems to us Englishmen of the present day a universal instinct is in truth the fruit of Christianity, and was almost unknown in the ancient world. Children who were “not wanted” were constantly exposed to be devoured by wild beasts, or otherwise made away with (Döllinger, *Jew and Gentile*, vol. ii. p. 246); and such exposition was defended by philosophers (Plat. *Rep.* v. p. 460 c). In Syria and Carthage they were constantly offered to idols. At Rome, unless the father interposed to save it, every child was killed. It would probably not have cost an Egyptian Pharaoh a single pang to condemn to death a number of children, any more than a number of puppies. And the rule “*Salus publica suprema lex*,” which, if not formulated, still practically prevailed, would have been held to justify anything. The river. Though, in the Delta, where the scene is laid throughout the early part of Exodus, there were many branches of the Nile, yet we hear constantly of “the river” (ch. ii. 3, 5; vii. 20, 21; viii. 3, etc.), because one branch only, the Tanitic, was readily accessible. Tanis (Zoan) was situated on it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15—22.—*Steps in sin.* Bad men, when their designs are frustrated, and things fall out otherwise than as they wish, are far from suspecting that it is God who opposes them and brings their counsels to nought. They find fault with themselves or their advisers, and suppose that, if their end is not to be compassed in one way, it may be

obtained in another. Like Balak (Num. xxii. xxiii.), they would outwit God; or rather, not realising his existence, they would force fortune by a combination of inventiveness, perseverance, and audacity. When one means fails, they do not lay aside their design, but seek another means. And their second plan is almost always more wicked than their first. Pharaoh follows up the cruel thought of grinding oppression by the still more cruel resolve to effect his purpose through murder. And not liking to incur the odium of open murder, he devises a secret system, a *crypteia*, which shall rid him of a certain number of his enemies, and yet keep him clear, even of suspicion. The midwives, had they come into his plan, would of course have said that the children they murdered were stillborn, or died from natural causes. But this crafty scheme likewise fails; and then what follows? His subtle brain invents a third plan, and it is the cruellest and wickedest of all. Grown shameless, he openly avows himself a murderer, takes his whole people into his confidence, compels them, so far as he can, to be a nation of murderers, and extends his homicidal project to all the males. "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river." The Nile, according to his own religion, was a god, and no Egyptian corpse ever defiled it; but everything must give way that the king may work his wicked will, and the restraints of the national creed are as little regarded as those of natural morality. *Facilis descensus Averni*; the steps by which men go down the road to hell are easy; each is in advance of the other, a little further on in guilt; there is no startling transition; and so, by little and little, advance is made, and the neophyte becomes a graduate in the school of crime.

Ver. 17.—*Duty of opposing authority when its commands are against God's Law.* Few lessons are taught in Holy Scripture more plainly than this, that the wrongful commands of legitimate authority are to be disobeyed. "Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants that they should kill David" (1 Sam. xix. 1). But Jonathan positively refused, and rebuked his father: "Wherefore wilt thou sin against innocent blood?" (*ib.* ver. 5). Uzziah would have usurped the priest's office; but Azariah the priest "withstood him" (2 Chr. xxvi. 16—21), and God signified his approval by smiting the king with leprosy. Ahasuerus commanded that a "reverence" trenching upon God's honour should be done to Haman (Esth. iii. 2). Mordecai "transgressed the king's commandment," and it is recorded of him to his credit. The "Three Children" disobeyed Nebuchadnezzar when he would have had them "worship the golden image which he had set up" (Dan. iii. 18) on the plain of Bura. Daniel disobeyed Darius the Mede when required to discontinue his daily prayers. The Apostles disobeyed the Sanhedrim, when forbidden "to preach at all or teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts iv. 18). God's law is paramount; and no human authority may require anything to be done which it forbids, or anything to be left undone which it commands. The argument is unanswerable: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (*ib.* ver. 19). So the midwives, because they "feared God," disobeyed the king. No doubt the lesson is to be applied with caution. We are not to be always flying in the face of authority, and claiming it as a merit. More especially, in States calling themselves Christian and retaining even partially a Christian character, opposition to the law is a serious matter, and, if resorted to, should only be resorted to under a clear and distinct conviction that the Divine law and the human are in absolute opposition. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." If we are not sure of the Divine obligation we must accept the human one. Still, as the good man struggling against adversity is admitted to be one of the noblest of sights, so there is nothing grander, nothing finer, nothing more heroic, than the conscientious resistance of religious persons to the wicked and tyrannical commands of men, whether they be kings, or judges, or mobs. Daniel refusing to obey Darius, Peter and John rejecting the orders of the Sanhedrim, Socrates declining to take part in the arrests of the Thirty, the Seven Bishops refusing to read the proclamation of King James II., are among the most admirable and inspiring facts of history. The men who rightfully resist authority are "the salt of the earth." They save the world from a rapid and complete corruption. The remembrance of their acts continues, and is a warning to authorities, preventing hundreds of iniquitous laws and orders, which would otherwise have been enjoined and enacted. Their example is an undying one, and encourages others on fitting occasion to do the like. All honour then

to the noble band, who, when the crisis came, have "obeyed God rather than man," and taken their chance of the consequences! Not that the *final* consequences to themselves can be doubtful. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye!" (1 Pet. iii. 14). In this life, the consequence may be success, severe punishment, or (occasionally) neglect and oblivion. But in the world to come there will be a reward for rightful resistance undoubtedly. "God made the midwives houses." For all whom a tyrannical authority makes to suffer because they fear and obey him, he will reserve in his own house "mansions" where they will enjoy bliss eternal.

Vers. 18—21.—*God's acceptance of an imperfect obedience.* The midwives had not the courage of their convictions. They did not speak out boldly, like Daniel, and the "Three Children," and the Apostles. They did not say, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we fear God, and will not do this thing." They cast about for an excuse, which should absolve them of the crime of disobedience, and so perhaps save them from punishment, and they found one which was no doubt partially true, but which by a *suppressio veri* was a *suggestio falsi*. Some have exonerated them from all blame under the circumstances; but though the circumstances may extenuate, they do not justify their conduct. It was a fault, but (especially if they were heathens) a venial fault. And it was perhaps repented of. At any rate God condoned it. He was not "extreme to mark what was done amiss." He accepted their good deeds and their reverent fear of him, though it was not accompanied by high courage and a heroic love of truth; that is to say, *he accepted an imperfect obedience*. And this is what he does in all cases. No man but One has rendered an obedience that was perfect. "All we, the rest, offend in many things; and if we say that we have no sin, deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Well for us that God, for his Son's sake, and through his atonement on the cross, can condone our offences, and despite our many misdeeds reward our acts of faithfulness! (See Matt. vi. 4; x. 42; xvi. 27; Luke vi. 35; 1 Cor. iii. 14; &c.)

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 15—22.—*A king's edicts.* I. THE COMMAND TO THE MIDWIVES TO DESTROY THE MALES (ver. 16). This was a further stage in the persecution of the Hebrews. Happily the command was not obeyed. There is a limit even to the power of kings. Stronger than kings is—1. The power of *religion*. "The midwives feared God" (ver. 17). 2. The force of *patriotism*. They were "Hebrew midwives" (ver. 15), and would not, even at the king's bidding, be murderers of their race. 3. The instincts of *humanity*. These came in to thwart both this and the next expedient for destroying the children. 4. The cunning of *evasion*. It is hopeless to attempt to force laws upon a people determined not to obey them. The midwives had only to stay away, and let the Hebrew women help themselves, to reduce the king's decree to a dead letter. And this was probably what they did (ver. 19). The result shows how much better it is, even at some risk, to obey God than to obey man. The midwives—1. Lost nothing. 2. Retained a good conscience. 3. Were signally honoured and rewarded: God made them houses (ver. 21). Kindness shown to God's people never fails of its reward.

II. THE COMMAND TO THE PEOPLE TO CAST THE MALES INTO THE RIVER (ver. 22). He must indeed have been a foolish king, if he thought to secure obedience to so inhuman a decree. Parents would not obey it. The work was of a kind which would soon grow hateful even to those who might at first be willing to do it for reward. The hearts of the most abandoned ere long sicken at murder. Public sympathy does not appear to have gone with the edict, and the number of males at the Exodus makes it certain that it was not long in operation. Its chief fruit was one little contemplated by the tyrant—the salvation and courtly upbringing of Moses. Learn—1. How one cruelty leads to another, and increasingly hardens the heart. It is told of Robespierre that when judge at Arras, half-a-dozen years before he took his place in the popular mind of France and Europe as one of the bloodiest monsters of myth or history, he resigned his post in a fit of remorse after condemning a criminal to be executed. "He is a criminal, no doubt," he kept groaning to his sister, "a criminal no doubt; but to put a man to death!" (Morley). 2. The impotence of human devices. 3. The

certainty of the Church surviving under the worst that man can do against it. The more Pharaoh persecuted, the more the people multiplied and grew (vers. 12, 20).—J. O.

Vers. 8-22.—*The policy of Pharaoh.* I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE POLICY. This is indicated in vers. 9, 10. It was a policy of *selfish fear*, proceeding upon an unconcealed regard for the supremacy of Egypt. Whatever interfered with that supremacy was to be, if possible, swept completely out of the way. Pharaoh was dealing, not with the necessities of the present, but with the possibilities of the future. He made no pretence that Israel deserved to be dealt with in this merciless fashion. There was no attempt to cloak the cruelties of the tyrant under the aspect of needful severity against evil-doers. The fear of Pharaoh is seen in the very language he employs. It was not true as yet that the Israelites were more and mightier than the Egyptians; but Pharaoh feels that such a state of things is not improbable, and may not be remote. Something has already happened very different from what might have been expected. Who was to suppose that a handful of people from Canaan, instead of blending with the bulk of Egypt, would keep persistently separate and increase with such alarming rapidity? Seeing that such unexpected things have already happened, what may not be feared in the future? Who knows what allies Israel may ultimately find, and what escape it may achieve? Thus from this attitude and utterance of Pharaoh we learn—1. *Not to make our safety and our strength to consist in an unscrupulous weakening of others.* The true strength, ever becoming more and more sufficient, is to be gained within ourselves. Pharaoh would have done more for his own safety and the safety of his people by putting away idolatry, injustice, and oppression, than by all his frantic attempts to destroy Israel. It is a sad business, if we must hold our chief possessions at the expense of others. If my gain is the loss or suffering of some one else, then by this very fact the gain is condemned, and however large and grateful it may be at present, it will end in the worst of all loss. Surely the luxuries of the few would become utterly nauseous and abhorrent, if it were only considered how often they depend on the privation and degradation of the many. Pharaoh's kingdom deserved to perish, and so deserve all kingdoms and all exalted stations of individuals, if their continuance can only be secured by turning all possible enemies into spiritless and emasculated slaves. 2. *Not to set our affections on such things as lie at the mercy of others.* Pharaoh had to be incessantly watching the foundations of his vast and imposing kingdom. Other nations only saw the superstructure from a distance, and might be excused for concluding that the magnificence rested upon a solid base. But we may well believe that Pharaoh himself lived a life of incessant anxiety. The apprehensions which he here expresses must have been a fair sample of those continually passing through his mind. The world can give great possessions and many opportunities for carnal pleasure; but security, undisturbed enjoyment of the possession, it cannot give.

II. THE WORKING OUT OF THE POLICY. The thing aimed at was to keep the numbers of Israel within what were deemed safe bounds; and to this end Pharaoh began by trying to crush the spirits of the people. He judged—and perhaps not unwisely, according to the wisdom of this world—that a race oppressed as he proposed to oppress Israel would assuredly not increase to any dangerous extent. If only the rate of increase in Israel did not gain on the rate of increase in Egypt, then all would be safe. Pharaoh firmly believed that if only Egypt could keep more numerous than Israel, Egypt would be perfectly secure. Therefore he put these people into a state of bondage and oppression ever becoming more rigorous. Notice that he had peculiar advantages, from his point of view, in making this course of treatment successful. The Israelites had hitherto lived a free, wandering, pastoral life (Gen. xlvii. 3-6), and now they were cooped-up under merciless taskmasters and set to hard manual toil. If any human policy had success in it, success seemed to be in this policy of Pharaoh. Nevertheless it utterly failed, from Pharaoh's point of view, for, whatever depressing effect it had on the spirits of the Israelites, there was no diminution in their numbers. The extraordinary and alarming increase still went on. The more the taskmasters did to hinder Israel, the more, in this particular matter of the numerical increase, it seemed to prosper. It was all very perplexing and unaccountable, but at last Pharaoh recognises the failure,

even while he cannot explain it, and proceeds to a more direct method of action, which surely cannot fail in a perfectly efficacious result. He commands the men-children of Israel to be slain from the womb. But here he fails even in a more conspicuous and humiliating way than before. He was a despot, accustomed to have others go when he said "Go," and come when he said "Come." Accordingly, when he commanded *men* to become the agents of his harsh designs, he found obedient servants in plenty, and probably many who bettered his instructions. But now he turns to *women*—weak, despised women, who were reckoned to obey in the most obsequious manner—and he finds that they will not obey at all. It was an easy thing to do, if it had only been in their hearts to do it; for what is easier than to take away the breath of a new-born infant? They do not openly refuse; they even pretend compliance; but for all that they secretly disobey and effectively thwart Pharaoh's purpose. When we find others readily join with us in our evil purposes, then God interferes to disappoint both us and them; but we cannot always reckon even on the support of others. Notice lastly, that in carrying out this policy of defence against Israel, Pharaoh never seems to have thought of the one course which might have given him perfect safety. *He might have expelled Israel altogether out of his coasts.* But, so far from deeming this desirable, it was one of the very things he wished to guard against. Israel was a continual source of alarm and annoyance, a people beyond management, an insoluble problem; but it never occurred to him that Egypt would be better with them away. It would have had a very bad look to send them out of the land; it would have been a confession of inability and perplexity which those proud lips, so used to the privileged utterances of despotism, could not bring themselves to frame.

III. THE TOTAL RESULT OF THE POLICY. Though it failed in attaining the particular end which it had in view, it did not fail altogether; nay, it rather succeeded, and that with a most complete success, seeing that in doing so it effectually served the purpose of God. Pharaoh *failed* as dealing with *the children of Israel*. He called them the children of Israel, but in profound ignorance of all that this description involved. He did not know that Israel was the son of him who was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, contrary to all expectation and entirely of promise. But Pharaoh *succeeded* in a way he did not anticipate, in so far as he was dealing with the posterity of Jacob, the heirs of human infirmity. They did become, in the course of time, slaves in spirit as well as in body, personally so undeserving of freedom that when they received it, they wished almost immediately to go back to the creature comforts of Egypt like a dog to its vomit, or a sow to her wallowing in the mire. Hence we see that God served himself, alike by Pharaoh's failure and Pharaoh's success. Pharaoh's failure showed how really and powerfully God was present with his people. It was another instance of the treasure being in an earthen vessel that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of men. And Pharaoh by his very success in making the iron to enter into the soul of Israel, was unconsciously working a way to make the stay of Israel in Egypt as full a type as possible of the tyrannous bondage of sin. As Egypt presented its pleasant side at first, so does sin. For a considerable time Egypt looked better than Canaan. There had been corn in Egypt; there had been a land of Goshen; there had been a reflected honour and comfort from the relation of the children of Israel to the all-powerful Joseph. But Joseph dies, and then little by little it becomes plain that Egypt will be anything but a land of happiness. What the Israelites might have become if Pharaoh had not persecuted them, it is vain to speculate, as vain as to speculate what might happen to the sinner if he could go on sinning without suffering. We have to thank Pharaoh for helping to set before us in such a clear way the bitter bondage of sin, and the greatness of that deliverance by which God will liberate us from it. God moves in a mysterious way. He fills Israel with a strength whereby even in bondage and oppression their numbers are miraculously increased, but he denies them the strength whereby they might have overthrown their oppressors. We can now see the why and wherefore of all this mysterious dealing. By the work of his Son God fills us with a life which, through all the discomforts of the present state, goes on undestroyed and still increasing into a state where these discomforts will be unknown. But at the same time God makes it clear that we cannot escape all the sufferings that belong to sin. So far as we have sown to the flesh, we must also out of the flesh reap corruption. Our joy is that, even in this world, amid all tribulation and all reaping of

the temporal results of sin, there is also the opportunity for another and better sowing, and the consequent opportunity for another and better reaping.—Y.

Vers. 15—21.—The conduct of the midwives. I. NOTICE WHAT WAS PRAISEWORTHY IN THEIR CONDUCT. "They did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive," and this *conduct* was made possible because behind it there was a praiseworthy *feeling*. "The midwives feared God." They saw how real was the power of Pharaoh in enslaving and oppressing the Israelites, but they were not thereby misled into supposing the power of Pharaoh to be greater than the power of God. They had ample opportunity, even more than the rest of Israel, to mark the Hand that was producing this extraordinary increase in the numbers of the people. Their very professional experience was of a kind to impress them deeply with the fact that Israel was increasing at a rate not to be accounted for by the ordinary processes of nature. They could not see God as they saw Pharaoh, but his superior power was made evident by the things he did. Then, on the other hand, with all the manifestations of Pharaoh's power, it was impossible for him to conceal that he was afraid himself. Moreover, as the oppression and affliction of Israel increased, it became still clearer that God was with the people, and the more confirmed would the midwives be in their fear of him. Hence it would have been a very poor sort of prudence to comply with Pharaoh's order, to avoid his displeasure, perhaps to gain his rewards, and then find themselves face to face with an angry God, from whom there was no escape. What a rebuke, out of these depths of bondage and suffering, and out of a very imperfect moral state, these two women give to us! They feared God, and that fear kept them safe, and made them prosperous. The fear of man ever bringeth a snare; but a real, practical and all-dominating sense of the presence and the power of God takes snares and stumbling-blocks out of our path.

II. NOTICE WHAT WAS CENSURABLE IN THEIR CONDUCT. It must not be supposed that because they feared God, and God dealt well with them, everything therefore which they did was quite as it should be. With all their deep sense of God's presence, these women were living but in the twilight of the revelation, as far as they personally were concerned. They knew enough to *fear* God, i.e. they knew the reality and greatness of his power, but they did not know enough to *love* him. With them, conscience was in such a half-enlightened, half-awakened state, that while they felt it wrong to obey Pharaoh's command, and would probably not have obeyed it if the sword had been hanging over their heads, yet they have no scruple as to deceiving Pharaoh. Undoubtedly, women who had been fully instructed in all the will of God, and who were fully alive to all the round of duty, would have faced the king boldly, and said, "We cannot do this thing, come what may." But they were living, as we have already noticed, in a very imperfect moral state. They honestly felt that deceiving Pharaoh was a quite permissible way of showing their obedience to God. Hence, while upon certain considerations we may excuse their deception, we must not slur it over as a matter of no moment; and though it is said that God was pleased with them as it was, this does not prevent us from feeling that he would have been even better pleased if they had said straight out to Pharaoh, "How can we do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

III. CONSIDER THE CONDUCT OF THESE TWO WOMEN AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF A CERTAIN STAGE IN THE PROGRESS OF SINNERS TOWARDS GOD. There are many who have got so far as to fear God, and this is no small attainment. It may be that there is something slavish, terrifying, paralysing even in the fear; but, even so, it is better to have the fear than be as those who are completely destitute of it. For, with a feeling of real fear to lay hold of, God can do great things. He can gradually bring us nearer and nearer, so that we shall love as well as fear him. He can show us his loving spirit, and his power to fill our lives with blessing and surround them with security. He can show us that there is really no more reason to live in restless dread of him than there is for a little bird to fly hastily away at the approach of some kind-hearted human being. But where there is no fear of God, what can be done? When the chief thing you dread is the laughter of fools; or the censure of unsympathising friends and neighbours or threatening superiors; or the fear of temporal loss and pain in general; what can then be done? Be thankful if you have got so far as to fear God. Fearing Him,

dreading him, trembling before him, feeling his power more than any other of his attributes—this is a long way short of loving him, but nevertheless it is a stage toward that glorious state of the heart; and it is incomparably better than to have no feeling for God at all, and to let an arrogant world fill his place. It is a great point gained, when once we clearly perceive, and act upon the perception, that to be safe and right with man is a mere trifle to the great necessity of being safe and right with God. One Pharaoh goes and another comes, but the God of Israel, the God who is bringing all these men-children to the birth, abides for ever. Before we begin to pity Shiphrah and Puah for their defective notions with regard to truth, we had better make sure that they do not rise in the judgment against us, on account of our gross indifference to the majesty and authority of God.—Y.

Vers. 15—22.—The way of sin. I. THE GROWING SHAMELESSNESS OF CRIME. 1. Murder was intended from the first—the hope was that the people *should* be diminished—but the intention was veiled. 2. (15, 16.) The crime was now looked in the face, but it was so arranged that it might be done secretly. 3. When this failed, then public proclamation was made that the murder should be deliberately and openly done (22). No man steps at first into shameless commission of sin. Every sin is a deadening of the moral sense and a deepening of shame.

II. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO AID IN PHARAOH'S CRIME FIND BLESSING. 1. The refusal of the midwives was service to God. (1) It prevented secret murder. (2) It rebuked Pharaoh's sin. 2. Their refusal was justified because it sprang from obedience to a higher authority: "they feared God." Disobedience to human law must have a higher sanction than a factious spirit. 3. God gave them inheritance among his people. In that dread of sin and heroism for the right they were fit allies for God's people. Those who separate themselves from evil God will lead into the light.

III. THOSE WHO AID BRING JUDGMENT UPON THEMSELVES. The king appeals to his people and they make his crime their own. But Egypt's sin is set at last in the light of Egypt's desolation. Obedience to unjust laws will not protect us from God's just judgment. The wrong decreed by authority becomes by obedience a nation's crime.—U.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II

Vers. 1—10.—THE BIRTH, ESCAPE, AND EDUCATION OF MOSES. Some years before the Pharaoh issued his edict for the general destruction of the Hebrew male children, Amram of the tribe of Levi, had married Jochebed, his kinswoman (ch. vi. 20). They had already had two children—Miriam, a daughter, born probably soon after the marriage, and Aaron, a son, born some twelve years later. Soon after the issue of the edict, Jochebed gave birth to her third child, a son, who therefore came under its terms. Knowing as she did what fate was in store for him, if his existence became known to the Egyptians, she "hid him three months." Then, despairing of being able to keep him concealed much longer, she devised the plan related in vers. 3—4, which proved successful.

Ver. 1.—There went a man. The Hebrew language is deficient in tenses, and cannot mark *pluperfect* time. The meaning is, that "a man of the house of Levi had gone, some

time before, and taken to wife a daughter of Levi." Miriam must have been fourteen or fifteen at the time of the exposure of Moses. By a daughter of Levi, we must not understand an actual daughter, which is irreconcilable with the chronology, but one of Levi's descendants—"a wife of the daughters of Levi," as the LXX. translates.

Ver. 2.—And the woman conceived. Not for the first time, as appears from ver. 4, nor even for the second, as we learn from ch. vii. 7; but for the third. Aaron was three years old when Moses was born. As no difficulty had occurred with respect to him, we must regard the edict as issued between his birth and that of Moses. When she saw that he was a goodly child. Perhaps Jochebed would have done the same had Moses been ill-favoured, for mothers have often loved best their weakest and sickliest; but still it naturally seemed to her the harder that she was called upon to lose a strong and beautiful baby; and this is what the writer means to express—the clauses are not "simply co-ordinate." She hid him—i.e. kept him within the house—perhaps even in the female apartments. Egyptians were mixed up with the Israelites

in Goshen—not perhaps in any great numbers, but still so that no Hebrew felt himself safe from observation.

Ver. 3.—She took for him an ark of bulrushes. The words translated “ark” and “bulrushes” are both of Egyptian origin, the former corresponding to the ordinary word for “chest,” which is *teb, teha, or tebat*, and the latter corresponding to the Egyptian *kam*, which is the same in Coptic, and designates the papyrus plant. This is a strong-growing rush, with a triangular stem, which attains the height of from 10 to 15 feet. The Egyptian paper was made from its pith. The rush itself was used for various purposes—among others for boat-building (Plin. ‘H. N.’ vi. 22; vii. 16; Theophrast. iv. 9; Plut. ‘De Isid. et Osir.’ § 18, etc.), as appears from the monuments. It would be a very good material for the sort of purpose to which Jochebed applied it. She daubed it with slime and with pitch. The word translated “slime” is the same as that used in Gen. xi. 3, which is generally thought to mean “mineral pitch” or “bitumen.” According to Strabo and Diodorus, that material was largely used by the Egyptians for the embalming of corpses, and was imported into Egypt from Palestine. Boats are sometimes covered with it externally at the present day (Kei Porter, Travels, vol. ii. p. 260; Layard, Nineveh and its Remains, pt. ii. ch. v.); but Jochebed seems to have used vegetable pitch—the ordinary pitch of commerce—for the purpose. Here again the Hebrew word is taken from the Egyptian. She laid it in the flags. “Suph,” the word translated “flags,” is a modification of the Egyptian *tufi*, which has that meaning. Water-plants of all kinds abound in the backwaters of the Nile and the marshy tracts communicating with it. The object of placing the ark in a thicket of reeds probably was, that it might not float away out of sight. The river’s brink. Literally, *the lip of the river*—an Egyptian idiom.

Ver. 4.—His sister. There can be no reasonable doubt that this is the “Miriam” of the later narrative (ch. xv. 20, 21; Num. xx. 1), who seems to have been Moses’ only sister (Num. xxvi. 59). She was probably set to watch by her mother.

Ver. 5.—The daughter of Pharaoh. Probably a daughter of Seti I. and a sister of Rameses the Great. Josephus calls her Thermuthis; Syncellus, Pharia; Artapanus, Merthis, and some of the Jewish commentators, Bithia—the diversity showing that there was no genuine tradition on the subject. There is nothing improbable in an Egyptian princess bathing in the Nile, at a place reserved for women. (See Wilkinson, ‘Manners and Customs of Ancient Egyptians,’ vol. iii. p. 389.) The Nile was regarded as sacred, and its water as health-giving and fructifying (Strab. xv.

p. 695). Her maidens. Egyptian ladies of high rank are represented on the monuments as attended to the bath by a number of hand-maidens. As many as four are seen in one representation (Wilkinson, l. s. c.). Her maid is her special personal attendant, the others being merely women attached to her household.

Ver. 6.—The princess herself opened the “ark,” which was a sort of covered basket. Perhaps she suspected what she would find inside; but would it be a living or a dead child? This she could not know. She opened, and looked. It was a living babe, and it wept. At once her woman’s heart, heathen as she was, went out to the child—its tears reached the common humanity that lies below all differences of race and creed—and she pitied it. “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” This is one of the Hebrews’ children. Hebrew characteristics were perhaps stamped even upon the infant visage. Or she formed her conclusion merely from the circumstances. No Egyptian woman had any need to expose her child, or would be likely to do so; but it was just what a Hebrew mother, under the cruel circumstances of the time, might have felt herself forced to do. So she drew her conclusion, rapidly and decidedly, as is the way of woman.

Vers. 7-9.—Then said his sister. Miriam had watched to some purpose. She had seen everything—she had drawn near as she beheld the “maid” go down to the water’s edge, and take the ark out. She had heard the words of the princess; and thereupon she promptly spoke—“Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women?” No doubt, all had been prepared beforehand by the mother, who had selected the place and time of the exposure from a knowledge of the habits and character of the princess, had set her daughter to watch, and—so far as was possible—instructed her what she was to say. But Miriam at least carried out the instructions given her with excellent judgment and tact. She would not speak too soon, nor too late. She did not say a word too much, nor too little. “Surely,” exclaimed the princess, “this is one of the Hebrews’ children.” “Shall I fetch thee then a Hebrew mother to nurse him? is the rejoinder. Egyptians, it is implied, cannot properly nurse Hebrews—cannot know how they ought to be treated; an Egyptian nurse would mismanage the boy—shall I fetch one of his own nation? And the princess, feeling all the force of the reasoning, answers in one short pregnant word—“Go.” “Yes,” she means, “do so: that will be best.” And then the result follows—“The maid (Miriam) went and called the child’s mother.” So the scheming of the loving mother, and the skilful performance of the part assigned her by the clever sister, were crowned with success—

Moses' life was saved, and yet he was not separated from his natural guardian, nor given over to the tender mercies of strangers: the child went back to his own home, to his own apartment, to his own cradle; continued to be nourished by his own mother's milk; and received those first impressions, which are so indelibly impressed upon the mind, in a Hebrew family. Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me." "Take him with you—take him to your own home for a while—and there nurse him *for me*, as long as he needs nursing." And to mark that he is mine, and not yours—to silence inquiry—to stop the mouths of informers—"I will give thee thy wages." Jochebed was more than content, and "took the child and nursed it."

Ver. 10.—The child grew. Compare Gen. xxi. 8, where the full phrase is used—"The child grew, and was weaned." Jochebed had saved her son's life by a transfer of her mother's right in him to Pharaoh's daughter. She had received him back, merely as a hired nurse, to suckle him. When the time came, probably at the end of the second year, for him to be weaned, she was bound, whatever the sufferings of her heart may have been, to give him up—to restore him to her from whom she had received him, as a child put out to nurse. And we see that she made no attempt to escape her obligations. No sooner was the boy weaned, than "she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter"—as it would seem, of her own accord. And he became her son. There is no evidence that formal "adoption" was a custom of the Egyptians; and probably no more is here meant than that the princess took the child into her family, and brought him up as if he had been her son, giving him all the privileges of a son, together with such an education as a princess's son usually received. We obtain the best general idea of what such an education was from the words of St. Stephen (Acts vii. 21)—"Now Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." This "wisdom," though not perhaps very deep, was multifarious and manifold. It included orthography, grammar, history, theology, medicine, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and engineering. Education began, as in most countries, with orthography and grammar. The hieroglyphical system was probably not taught, and the knowledge of it remained a special privilege of the priest-class: but the cursive character, known as the

hieratic, was generally studied, and all tolerably educated persons could read it and write it. Style was cultivated, and though no great progress was made in the graces of finished composition, the power of expressing thought and relating facts in a simple and perspicuous prose was acquired by the greater number. Much attention was paid to letter-writing: and models of business and other letters were set before the pupil as patterns which he was to follow. By the more advanced, poetry was read, and poetic composition occasionally practised. Arithmetic and geometry, up to a certain point, were studied by all: and a plain morality was inculcated. But history, theology, astronomy, medicine, and engineering, were viewed as special studies, to be pursued by those intended for certain professions, rather than as included within the curriculum of an ordinary education; and it may well be doubted whether Moses' attention was much directed to any of them. He may indeed have been initiated into the mysteries, and in that case would have come to understand the esoteric meaning of the Egyptian myths, and of all that most revolts moderns in the Egyptian religion. But, on the whole, it is most probable that he was rather trained for active than for speculative life, and received the education which fitted men for the service of the State, not that which made them dreamers and theorists. His great praise is, that "he was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts, l.s.c.); and he was certainly anything rather than a recluse student. We should do wrong to regard him as either a scientific man or a philosopher. His genius was practical; and his education was of a practical kind—such as fitted him to become the leader of his people in a great emergency, to deal on equal terms with a powerful monarch, and to guide to a happy conclusion the hazardous enterprise of a great national migration. And she called his name Moses. The Egyptian form of the name was probably Mesu, which signifies "born, brought forth, child," and is derived from a root meaning "to produce," "draw forth." Egyptian has many roots common to it with Hebrew, whereof this is one. The princess's play upon words thus admitted of being literally rendered in the Hebrew—"she called his name Mosheh (drawn forth); because, she said, I drew him forth (*meshilthi-hu*) from the water." Mesu is found in the monuments as an Egyptian name under the nineteenth dynasty

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—2.—§ 1. *The birth of Moses.* In the providence of God, great men are raised up from time to time, for the express object of working out his purposes. A great task is before them, but there is often nothing peculiar, nothing striking, in their birth or parentage. They come into the world with as little commotion, as little éclat,

as other children. True history admits this. Legendary history conceals it, denies it, makes up a series of extraordinary events anterior to the birth, which shadow forth the coming greatness of the mighty one, and warn the world what to expect of him. The legends attaching to Cyrus, to Romulus, to Pericles (Herod. vi. 131) are cases in point. Contrast with such legends the extreme simplicity of vers. 1, 2;—"There went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi; and the woman conceived and bare a son." Here is the founder of the Jewish nation, the originator of its independence, its lawgiver, historian, prophet, for the first time introduced to our notice; and not one word is said to exalt him, to challenge to him special attention, to show that he is the foremost man of his age, greater than Pentaour the poet, or Seti, or Rameses. His father and mother not even named—"a man"—"a daughter of Levi"—no rank assigned them, no epithet used—nothing recorded but the bare facts: a marriage, a birth, the child a male child, a son! Here at length a note is struck, which wakes a responsive echo in the heart of the reader. The last verse of ch. i. had told him of the barbarous edict issued by the cruel despot who wielded the sceptre of Egypt, and his interest is awakened for the poor babe born under such circumstances. Will he perish at once, or will he escape? Can it be possible to elude or defy the express order of an absolute monarch? And if so, how? The sequel shows, relating as it does his escape from death through the faithful, bold, and loving action of his mother. (See below, p. 27.)

Vers. 2.—§ 2. *The beauty of Moses.* Moses was "a goodly child"—beautiful to look upon—"fair to God," or "exceeding fair," as St. Stephen expresses it (Acts vii. 20). Though beauty be but "skin-deep," and if unaccompanied by loveliness of character is apt to be a snare and a curse, yet, in its degree, and rightly employed, it must be regarded as a blessing. The beauty of Old-Testament saints is often mentioned. Moses was "goodly," David "ruddy and of a beautiful countenance" (1 Sam. xvi. 12), Daniel "fair and well-favoured" (Dan. i. 4, 15), Esther "fair and beautiful" (Esth. ii. 7); Solomon was comely and "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Cant. v. 10): One greater than Solomon was "fairer than the children of men" (Ps. xlv. 2). It is an affliction to ignore beauty, and the influence which it gives. Those who possess it should be taught that they are answerable for it, as for other gifts, and are bound to use it to God's glory. Esther's example may help them in the details of conduct.

Vers. 3—9.—§ 3. *The escape of Moses.* The escape of Moses teaches three things especially—1. God's over-ruling providence, and his power to make wicked men work out his will; 2. The blessing that rests upon a mother's faithful love and care; and 3. The fact that natural virtue is acceptable in God's sight.

I. GOD'S OVER-RULING PROVIDENCE turned the cruel king's edict to the advantage of the child whom he designed for great things. Had it not been for the edict, Moses would never have been exposed, and Pharaoh's daughter would probably never have seen him. Had she not come down to the river when she did—had any little circumstance occurred to prevent her, as might easily have happened, the child might have died of hunger or exposure before she saw it, or might have been found by an unfriendly Egyptian and thrown from the ark into the water. Moreover, had the child not happened to be in tears when she opened the ark, it might not have moved her compassion, or at any rate not have so stirred it as to make her take the boy for her son. In any of these contingencies, Moses, even if saved by some further device of his mother's, would not have had the education which alone fitted him to be the nation's leader and guide, nor the familiarity with court life which enabled him to stand up boldly before the Pharaoh of his time and contend with him as an equal. Thus Pharaoh's pet weapon, the edict, was turned against himself, and brought about that Exodus of the Israelites which he was so anxious to hinder (ch. i. 10). It was an aggravation of his punishment that the hand by which his designs were frustrated was that of his own daughter, who unwittingly preserved the child which, of all others, he was most concerned to destroy.

II. GOD'S BLESSING ON A MOTHER'S FAITHFUL LOVE AND CARE. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents" (Heb. xi. 23). Disobedience to the edict of the king would in Egypt, if detected, have been punished either by death or

mutilation. Amram and Jochebed, but especially Jochebed, who must have been the main agent in the concealment, braved these penalties—did not allow their fear of them to influence their conduct—had *faith* in God that he would, somehow or other, give success to their endeavours to preserve their child, and either save them from punishment or reward them in another world. And it was done to them according as they believed. The concealment of the birth was undetected for the long space of three months—the ark was placed, no one perceiving, among the flags at the edge of the river—the daughter of Pharaoh made her appearance at the time expected—“had compassion” on the babe—accepted without hesitation Miriam’s suggestion that she should fetch a nurse—accepted without demur or suspicion the mother as the nurse—gave him back to her care for a space of nearly two years—and finally assigned the child the highest position possible, almost that of a prince of the blood royal—allowed him to be called and considered her son—and had him educated accordingly. Jochebed’s utmost hope had probably been to save her child’s life. God’s blessing brought it to pass that she not only obtained that result, but procured him the highest social rank and the best possible cultivation of all his powers, whether of mind or body. Mothers should lay this lesson to heart, and—whatever danger threatens their children—hope for the best, plan for the best, work for the best; they may not always, like Jochebed, find *a.* their plans crowned with success; but they may trust God to bless their endeavours in his own way and in his own good time, if only they be made in faith, and with due submission of their own wills to his.

III. NATURAL VIRTUE ACCEPTABLE IN GOD’S SIGHT. There runs through both the Old and the New Testament a continual protest against the view that God is “a respecter of persons” in the sense of confining his favour to those who have been brought by the appointed mode into actual covenant with him. The lesson is taught with frequent iteration, that “in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts x. 35). Here it is an Egyptian—Pharaoh’s daughter—that is evidently regarded favourably. Elsewhere it is Rahab of Jericho, or Ruth the Moabitess, or Araunah the Jebusite, or Darius the Mede, or Cyrus the Persian, or Artaxerxes, or the Syro-Phœnician woman, or Cornelius the centurion—all of whom are examples of the same universal law, which is, that God looks graciously upon all his creatures, and accepts every sincere effort towards good that is made by any of them. In his house are “many mansions”—in his future kingdom are many gradations. No one is shut out of his kingdom by the circumstances of his birth or profession. Let a man but seek honestly to do his will according to his lights, and persevere to the end, he will obtain acceptance, whatever the belief in which he has been brought up, and whatever his professed religion. His profession will not save him; but his love of goodness, his efforts to do what is right, his earnest cleaving to truth, and right, and virtue, will be accepted, through the merits of Christ, and counted to him for righteousness. Man may be very far gone from his original perfectness; but he was made in God’s image—he has an instinctive sense of right and wrong. When he refuses the evil and chooses the good—whether he be in covenant with God or out of covenant—his conduct is pleasing and acceptable for Christ’s sake, who has enlightened him and sustained him, and enabled him to do his good works, and presents them to the Father and obtains for them acceptance through his merits. Pharaoh’s daughter stands to us here as a type of the heathen world—a world lying in wickedness, but still salvageable, still on the verge of salvation—she has the approval of the writer, and of the Holy Spirit, who inspired him—she had only to continue to act compassionately, kindly—according to her lights, rightly—and she was secure of final acceptance by him who “judges the folk righteously, and governs all the nations upon earth” (Ps. lxxvii. 4). We hear much in these days of God’s supposed exclusiveness and favouritism. Scripture does not sanction any such views. He is there presented to us as “no respecter of persons,” but “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. xi. 6).

Ver. 10.—§ 4. *The education of Moses.* Education is to fit us for the battle of life. The first and most important point is that a child be “virtuously brought up to lead a godly life.” In Egypt morality was highly regarded; and some have gone so far as to say that “the laws of the Egyptian religion”—in respect of morality at any rate—

"fell short in nothing of the teachings of Christianity" (see Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 20). This is, no doubt, an over-statement; but it is the fact, that correct and elevated ideas on the subject of morality were entertained by the Egyptian sages, and inculcated on the young by Egyptian teachers. To "give bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, set the wanderer in his path, resist the oppressor, and put a stop to violence," were regarded as the first elements of duty, the very alphabet of morality, which the most ignorant was expected to know and practise. To the more advanced such counsels as the following were given :—"If thou art become great after thou hast been humble, and if thou hast amassed riches after poverty, and art come to be the first man of thy city; if thou art known for thy wealth, and hast become a great lord: let not thy heart grow proud because of thy riches; for it is God who has given them to thee." "Despise not another who is as thou wast; be towards him as towards thine equal." "Happiness makes one content with any abode; but a small disgrace darkens the life of a great man." "Good words shine more than the emerald which the hand of the slave finds among a heap of pebbles." "The wise man is satisfied with what he knows; content dwells in his heart, and his lips speak words that are good." "The son who accepts the words of his father will grow old in consequence; for obedience is of God, disobedience is hateful to God." "Let thy heart wash away the impurity of thy mouth: fulfil the word of thy master." Moses in the household of a virtuous Egyptian princess, the wife probably of a respected official, would be guarded from corrupting sights and sounds, would hear none but "good words," would learn courtesy, good manners, politeness, affability, gentlemanly ease; while at the same time he would have inculcated upon him the duties of activity, diligence, truthfulness, benevolence, consideration for others, temperance, purity, courage. The peculiar circumstances of his position, as a foreigner, a foundling, a mere adopted child, would lay him open to many a reproach and innuendo on the part of those who were jealous of his good-fortune. In this way his path would be beset with difficulties, which would furnish the necessary discipline that might otherwise have been lacking to one brought up by a tender and indulgent mistress who assumed towards him the attitude of a mother. He would learn the virtues of reticence and self-control. As he grew to manhood, active duties would no doubt be assigned to him—he would have to exercise a certain amount of authority in the household, to undertake the management of this or that department, and thus acquire experience in the direction and government of men. Altogether, it is easy to see that the position wherein by God's providence he was placed would furnish an excellent training for the part which he was to be called upon to play, would naturally tend to make him at once outwardly gentle and inwardly firm and self-reliant; at once bold to rebuke kings and patient to govern a stiff-necked and refractory people.

To the moral training thus furnished was added a mental training, on which we have already enlarged. Book-learning is of little use towards the management of men. But when it is superadded to a good practical education, which has already given active habits and facility in dealing with all the various circumstances of life, it adds a grace and dignity to its possessor which are far from contemptible. Moses, without his Egyptian "learning," might have led his people out of Egypt and conducted them safely to Palestine; but he would have lost his most glorious titles and offices; he would scarcely have been the great legislator that he was; he could certainly not have been the great historian, or the great poet. Moses, to obtain the knowledge and the powers that he shows in his writings, must have been during his youth a most diligent student. In this respect he is a pattern to all the young, and most especially to those high-placed youths who are too apt to think that their wealth and rank put them above the necessity of hard work and diligent application. The truth is, that such a position lays its holder under a special obligation to diligence. "Noblesse oblige." Those who are highly placed, and will have many eyes on them, should endeavour to make their acquirements such as will bear close scrutiny and observation. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—A child of providence. This section recounts the birth, deliverance, and upbringing at the court of Pharaoh, of the future Deliverer of Israel. In which we have to notice—

I. AN ACT OF FAITH ON THE PART OF MOSES' PARENTS. The faith of Moses' parents is signalled in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. xi. 23). Observe—1. *The occasion of its trial.* The king's edict threatened the child's life. The case of Moses was peculiar, yet not entirely so. No infancy or childhood but lays a certain strain upon the faith of parents. The bark of a child's existence is so frail, and it sets out amidst so many perils! And we are reminded that this strain is usually more felt by the mother than the father, her affection for her offspring being in comparison deeper and more tender (cf. Is. xlix. 15). It is the mother of Moses who does all and dares all for the salvation of her babe. 2. *Its nature.* Both in Old and New Testaments it is connected with something remarkable in the babe's appearance (Acts vii. 20; Heb. xi. 23). Essentially, however, it must have been the same faith as upholds believers in their trials still—simple, strong faith in God, that he would be their Help in trouble, and would protect and deliver the child whom with tears and prayers they cast upon his care. This was sufficient to nerve Jochebed for what she did. 3. *Its working.* Faith wrought with works, and by works was faith made perfect (Jas. ii. 22). (1) It nerved them to disobey the tyrant's edict, and hide the child for three months. Terrible as was this period of suspense, they took their measures with prudence, calmness, and success. Religious faith is the secret of self-collectedness. (2) It enabled them, when concealment was no longer practicable, to make the venture of the ark of bulrushes. The step was bold, and still bolder if, as seems probable, Jochebed put the ark where she did, knowing that the princess and her maidens used that spot as a bathing-place. Under God's secret guidance, she ventured all on the hope that the babe's beauty and helplessness would attract the lady's pity. She would put Pharaoh's daughter as a shield between her child and Pharaoh's mandate. Learn—1. Faith is not inconsistent with the use of means. 2. Faith exhausts all means before abandoning effort. 3. Faith, when all means are exhausted, waits patiently on God. 4. Pious parents are warranted in faith to cast their children on God's care. It was a sore trial to Jochebed to trust her child out of her own arms, especially with that terrible decree hanging over him. But faith enabled her to do it. She believed that God would keep him—would make him his charge—would provide for him,—and in that faith she put the ark among the rushes. Scarcely less faith are parents sometimes called upon to exercise in taking steps of importance for their children's future. Missionaries in India, e.g., parting with their children, sons leaving home, etc. Sorest trial of all, when parents on their deathbeds have to part with little ones, leaving them to care of strangers. Hard, very hard, to flesh and blood; but God lives, God cares, God will provide,—will watch the ark of the little one thus pushed out on the waters of the wide, wide world.

II. AN ACT OF PROVIDENCE ON THE PART OF MOSES' GOD. The faith of Moses' parents met with its reward. Almost "whiles" they were yet "praying" (Dan. ix. 20), their prayers were answered, and deliverance was vouchsafed. In regard to which observe—1. *How various are the instrumentalities employed by Providence in working out its purposes.* A king's edict, a mother's love, a babe's tears, a girl's shrewdness, the pity of a princess, Egyptian customs, etc. 2. *How Providence co-operates with human freedom in bringing about desired results.* The will of God was infallibly accomplished, yet no violence was done to the will of the agents. In the most natural way possible, Moses was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, restored to his mother to nurse, adopted by the princess as her son, and afterwards educated by her in a way suitable to his position. Thus was secured for Moses—(1) Protection. (2) A liberal education. (3) Experience of court-life in Egypt. 3. *How easily the plans of the wicked can be turned against themselves.* Pharaoh's plans were foiled by his own daughter. His edict was made the means of introducing to his own court the future deliverer of the race he meant to destroy. God takes the wicked in their own net (Ps. ix. 15, 16). 4. *How good, in God's providence, is frequently brought out of evil.* The people might

well count the issuing of this edict as the darkest hour of their night—the point of lowest ebb in their fortunes. Yet see what God brought out of it! The deliverance of a Moses—the first turning of the tide in the direction of help. What poor judges we are of what is really for or against us! 5. *How greatly God often exceeds our expectations in the deliverances he sends.* He does for us above what we ask or think. The utmost Moses' parents dared to pray for was doubtless that his life might be preserved. That he should be that very day restored to his mother, and nursed at her bosom; that he should become the son of Pharaoh's daughter; that he should grow to be great, wise, rich, and powerful—this was felicity they had not dared to dream of. But this is God's way. He exceeds our expectations. He gives to faith more than it looks for. So in Redemption, we are not only saved from perishing, but receive "everlasting life" (John iii. 16)—honour, glory, reward.—J. O.

Vers. 1—9.—*The infancy of Moses.* I. WE HAVE, IN THIS EXPERIENCE OF THE INFANT AND HIS MOTHER, A MOST AFFECTING ILLUSTRATION OF THE MISERABLE STATE TO WHICH ISRAEL HAD BEEN REDUCED. We come down from the general statement of the first chapter to the particular instance of the second. Moses was born, in all likelihood, just at the very height of Pharaoh's exasperation, and when the command of ch. i. 22 was in process of being carried out. His servants, ever becoming more savage and brutal in disposition, as the very consequence of the harshness and severity they had daily to exercise, would be going about, watching the midwives and hanging round the abodes of the Israelites to listen for the first faint cry of the newborn child. In such circumstances, the work of the midwives most likely fell into abeyance; for the midwife became the unwilling herald of the murderer. Thus mothers in the crisis of their greatest need might be left without any ministry or sympathy whatever; their greatest safety in solitude, their greatest comfort to know that the newborn infant's existence was utterly unknown to any Egyptian. No hour could well be darker, no circumstances more provocative of despair. We may depend upon it that God meant much to be suggested to Israel in after generations, by the birth of Moses just at this time. "In which time Moses was born" (Acts vii. 20). May we not well imagine that when in later years Moses stole away from time to time, out of the splendours and luxuries of his royal home, to spend an hour or two with his own mother, she would tell him that, for all his relation to Pharaoh's daughter and all his privileges about the court, he had been once, with many another helpless babe, the object of Pharaoh's bitterest animosity. Things were in a very bad state when Moses was born. Bad for Israel in point of present suffering; bad for Egypt itself, seeing what a merciless and unscrupulous man sat upon the throne; bad for the prospects of Moses and all the coming generation. And so we cannot but feel that the whole world was in a very bad state when Jesus was born. He was exposed to the risk of a Herod; and Herod was but one of many like-minded oppressors. And worse than any cruelty and oppression from without was the state of the people in their hearts. Jew and Gentile were alike utterly departed from God. Romans, ch. i., does as much as human language can do to give us the measure of the universal corruption and degradation. We shall do well to mark in the New Testament the many things that show what unregenerate, vile, and apostate hearts were those with whom Christ and his apostles came in contact. Then, when we have the dark, repulsive picture of the times well before us, we may imitate Stephen, and say—"in which time Christ was born."

II. WE HAVE A MOST AFFECTING INSTANCE OF THE PECULIAR CARES AND SORROWS WHICH BELONG TO THE MATERNAL RELATION. "When she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months." This can hardly mean that if he had been a puny dwarfing, she would have cast him aside as not worth anxiety. We know that it is precisely the weakest, the least attractive to a stranger's eye, who most draws forth the mother's love: thus furnishing a sweet suggestion of that Divine affection which yearns, with the greatest tenderness, over those who may seem to others hopelessly lost. But as Moses was a goodly child, she was bound by this fact to give all available chances for the promise that was in him. Who can tell what anxieties and alarms filled her thoughts during these terrible three months, and how often she skirted the extreme edge of disaster, always feeling that with each succeeding week her task became more difficult? How keen must have been the struggle before she brought her

mind to face the dread necessity of exposure! We can imagine her being driven to decisive action at last, by seeing the agonies of some neighborly mother, as the servants of Pharaoh discover her child and ruthlessly extinguish its delicate life. Here, in the sufferings of the mother of Moses, and of all the rest whom she but represents, we have something like the full significance set before us of that curse which first rested upon Eve. There may have been a measure of truth in what the midwives said concerning the ease with which the mothers in Israel had been delivered; but not so were they going to escape the curse. Their trouble only began when the man-child was born into the world. Not to them at least was the birth to be an occasion of joy, but the beginning of unspeakable solicitude (Matt. ii. 16-18; xxiv. 19; John xvi. 21). This poor woman exposed her tender infant, not because she was callous of heart, unnatural, and lacking in love; but because of the very intensity of her love. So wretched had the state of Israel become that its infants found no place so dangerous as the place that should have been safest—the warm bosom of the mother.

III. WE HAVE A MOST IMPRESSIVE ILLUSTRATION OF WOMANLY SYMPATHY. The Scriptures, true to their character as being the fullest revelation not less of human nature than of the Divine nature, abound in illustrations of the demonstrativeness of womanly sympathy. To go no further afield, we have such an illustration in the previous chapter (the conduct of the midwives). But here there is an instance which is peculiarly impressive. It was the daughter of Pharaoh who showed the much-needed sympathy. She knew well how the babe came to be forsaken, and how, though it was forsaken, this waterproof ark had been so carefully provided for it. Somewhere in Israel she could see a mother anxiously speculating on the fate of this child; and she knew that all the strange discovery she had made came out of the stern, unrelenting policy of her own father. Some women indeed in her circumstances would have said, "Sad it may be that an infant should thus perish, but my father knows best. Leave it there." But compassion rose to flood-tide in her heart, and choked all thoughts of selfish policy, if they even so much as entered into her mind. Jesus says to his disciples, concerning one of the difficulties and pains of discipleship, that a man's foes shall be they of his own household. And the principle seems to hold good in the carrying out of worldly plans. If a man wants to be downright selfish, he also may find foes in his own household, not to be conquered, bribed, or persuaded. Pharaoh thinks he is closing-up the energies of Israel in a most effective fashion; but his own daughter opens a little window only large enough for an infant three months old to get through it, and by this in the course of time all the cunning and cruelty of her father are made utterly void.

IV. We have, in all these events connected with the infancy of Moses, A CRITICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE REALITY OF SPECIAL PROVIDENCE. Notice that there is not a word about God in the narrative; indeed, he is not mentioned as having anything directly to do with Moses, until the interview, long after, at Horeb. There is plenty of mention of human beings, in the play of their affections, their desires, and their ingenuity. The mother, the child, the sister, the nurse, the mother by adoption, all come before us, but there is no mention of God. Yet who does not feel that the Lord of Israel, unmentioned though he be, is yet the central, commanding, and controlling figure in all that takes place! It was he who caused Moses to be born at that particular time. It was he who sheltered the infant during these three months, when perhaps others were being snatched away in close proximity on the right hand and the left. It was he who put into the heart of the mother to dispose of her child in this particular way, and taught her to make such a cradle as surely never was made before. It was he who gave the sister wisdom to act as she did—a wisdom possibly beyond her years. It was he who turned the feet of Pharaoh's daughter (of her and no one else) in that particular direction, and not in some other. All his excellent working in this matter is hidden from those who do not wish to see it; but how manifest it is, how wonderful and beautiful, to those whose eyes he himself has opened! How different is his working here from the working of the *Deus ex machina* in the tanglements and complications of classical fable. There, when things get to all appearance hopelessly disordered, a deity comes in visible form and puts them right. But in this real deliverance of Moses, the God who is the only true God works in a far different way. He works through natural means, and so silently, so unobtrusively, that if men wise in

their own conceits are determined to ignore his presence, there is nothing to force it upon them.

V. This narrative, along with that of the midwives, has a VERY SPECIAL BEARING ON THE CAPABILITIES AND DUTIES OF WOMEN. We have here in the compass of some five-and-twenty verses a most encouraging instance of what women are able to do. So far, in this book of the Exodus, God is seen exalting the woman and abasing the man. Man, so far as he appears, is set before us a weak, thwarted creature; cruel enough in disposition, but unable to give his cruelty effect. Even a king with all his resources is baffled. But weak women set themselves to work, to shelter a helpless infant, and they succeed. Here as on other occasions the hand of God is manifest, taking the weak things of the world to confound the strong. What a lesson, what an appeal and warning to women! We are all only too readily inclined to say, "What can I do?"—women perhaps more than others, because of their inability to share in the bustle and strain of public life. Think then of what God enabled these women to do, simply following out the dictates of natural affection and pity. They did far more than they were conscious of. Might not women ask very earnestly if they are doing anything like what they ought to do, and have the opportunity to do, in bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Christian women, those who are themselves new creatures in Christ Jesus, able to have all the love and wisdom and every spiritual grace that belongs to the new creature, might do a work for the world, compared with which the work of these women whom we have been considering would look a small matter indeed.—Y.

Vers. 1—10.—*By works was faith made perfect.* Bad times; harsh decrees against the Israelites; doubts and misgivings which must have occurred to one in Amram's position; a hard *experience* and a dark *prospect*. Still the man believed in God, remembered the promises, and knew that God also must remember them; did not see *how* they were to be fulfilled, but was content to do his own duty and leave all else to God. See—

I. HOW HIS FAITH WAS MANIFESTED BY HIS WORKS. We have—1. *His marriage.* Under all the circumstances he might well have been excused if he had decided to remain unmarried. Such advice as that of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. vii. 25—28) would seem to apply to such a time. The matter, however, was not to be so easily settled. *Faith* will not permit marriage without prudence and due forethought, but neither will *Faith* permit abstinence from marriage merely because marriage will bring "trouble in the flesh." Improvidence and a too-calculating abstinence both prompted by selfishness. *Faith* looks forward and looks around, but she looks *up* also, and is guided by the result of that upward look. Theories of political economists, etc., are not to be despised, none the less *Faith* will act—her actions *regulated* to some extent, but not *fettered*, by calculation. Paul's teaching is to be qualified by Amram's example; Amram knew the times, foresaw the rocks ahead, yet he "took to wife a daughter of Levi." 2. *His choice of a wife.* Clear from narrative that the woman was the man's true helpmeet. Of the same family, they must have been well acquainted, and her conduct shows that her faith equalled his. *Faith* not only prompted marriage, but also directed choice. Amram and his wife did not marry merely for the sake of marrying, but "for the mutual society, help, and comfort which the one ought to have of the other both in prosperity and adversity." 3. *Conduct in the face of trial.* The two, man and wife, now as one: though the woman comes to the fore, no doubt her faith represents that of both. Aaron and Miriam, reared before the trial reached its height; then "a goodly child," just at the season of greatest danger. Note the action prompted by faith; how different from that which might have been suggested by fatalism. Fatalism would have said, "Let things be; if he must be killed he must." Cf. Eastern proverb, "On two days it skills not to avoid death, the appointed and the unappointed day." *Faith*, on the other hand, is ready and courageous, holding that God helps those who help themselves, or rather that he helps them *through* self-help. But notice—

II. HOW THIS LIVING FAITH WAS APPROVED AND JUSTIFIED. 1. The conduct of the wife justified her husband's choice. She was the helpmeet he hoped she would be. God gave her wisdom to comfort and strengthen him; *His* blessing added the third strand to that threefold cord which is not quickly broken. 2. Their united efforts

for the preservation of their children were crowned by God with complete success. [Illustrate from the history—all happening, all *ordained* to happen, just as they hoped.] They had prepared, by carrying out the plan which faith prompted, a channel through which God's gracious and ready help might reach them; and God used the channel which they had prepared. The whole narrative shows how faith, when it is living, proves its life by works, and how in response to a living faith God shows that he is a living God. If Amram had walked by sight and not by faith, Moses might never have been born, Jochebed never have been married; as it was he walked by faith and not by sight, doing his duty and trusting God, and through him came redemption unto Israel—the child “*taken out of*” the water became the leader who should “*take*” his people “*out of*” bondage.—G.

Vers. 1—10.—A picture of true faith. I. WHAT TRUE FAITH IS. 1. There was obedience to a Divine impulse: her heart was appealed to, she saw he was a goodly child, and she hid him three months. She read in the child's appearance an intimation of future greatness, and that God did not mean him to die in accordance with the king's commandment. The work of faith begins in obeying the Spirit's prompting in the heart. 2. She was not daunted by difficulties. She might have asked what could this temporary concealment do but only prolong her misery. Faith is content if it has light but for one step. 3. Faith is fertile in expedients. The safety which is no longer to be had in the home may be found on the waters. 4. When it has done all, it waits, as with girded loins, for the dawning light. Miriam stood afar off.

II. HOW GOD JUSTIFIES OUR TRUST. When we have done all, and, knowing it is nothing, look unto him, then God appears for us. 1. The child's life was saved. 2. He was given back into his mother's arms. 3. The very might which before was raised to slay was now used to guard him. 4. He was freed from the unhappy lot of his countrymen, and set among the princes of the land. Our trust prepares a place where God may manifest himself. He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”—U.

Vers. 1—10.—The child of the water. “And she called his name Moses . . . water.”—Exod. ii. 10. Save Jesus, Moses is the greatest name in history. Compare with it Mahomet, or even that of Paul. As the founder of the Jewish religion—under God—his influence is felt to-day, not only by 6,000,000 Jews, but throughout the Christian Church. Here is the beginning of his career. This mighty stream of influence we can trace to its source; not like the Nile, whose origin is still in debate, a mystery. The text gives the name and its reason. The derivation is either Hebrew, and then= “Drawing out,” so designating the act of the princess; or Egyptian, and then= “Saved from the water.” The name a memorial of salvation. Happy, when children bearing distinguished names, shame them not in the after-years. We treat the subject in the order of the story: so its suggestiveness for heart and life will appear.

I. THE FAMILY OF THE CHILD. Amram and Jochebed, the father and mother; Miriam, much older, and Aaron, three years older, than Moses. Note: *Moses owed*—1. *Little to his family.* Look at ver. 1. But the pre-eminence of Levi was not yet. The tribe did not make Moses; rather Moses (with Miriam and Aaron) the tribe. “Blue blood?” Yes! and No! There is a sense in which we may be proud of ancestry, a sense in which not. What to me that I descend from a Norman baron? Everything to me that I come from able, gifted, saintly parentage. See Cowper on “My Mother's Picture,” lines 108—112. 2. *Little to his home.* Only a slave hut; the scene of toil, poverty, suffering, fear. Out of it brought one thing—sympathy with suffering. 3. *Little to his parents.* Biographers usually give us the attributes and history of ancestors, and show how they account for the career of the child. Nothing of that here. Even the names of the parents do not appear. Note omission in ver. 1. “A man,” etc. “A daughter,” etc. No doubt here a mental and moral heritage; but little training, because little opportunity. Generally, there is, under this head, a lesson of encouragement for those who have, or fancy they have, hard beginnings in life. Some of earth's noblest have risen out of disadvantage.

II. THE APPEARANCE OF THE CHILD. For traditions of predictions of his birth see Jos. Antiq. ii. 9. 2—4. Moses was—1. *No common child.* Scepticism objects that

Miriam and Aaron are not mentioned in vers. 1, 2 by name. But the motive and impulse of inspiration are to be taken into account. The object was to give the event which led to the Exodus, and to the constitution of the Jewish Church. From this point of view interest concentrates on Moses. Hence we infer the extraordinary greatness of his character and career. 2. *Born at a critical moment.* See Acts vii. 20. So the Jewish proverb: "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses." Note:—(1) At the moment of deepest darkness God sends deliverance. (2) When he wants instruments he creates them. 3. *Of no common beauty.* Not only in his mother's eyes, which would be natural enough, but absolutely. See Acts vii. 20, as well as Exod. ii. 2; and for interesting illustration, Jos. Antiq. ii. 9. 6. All this the promise of a higher beauty of character that opened out with the years.

III. THE DANGER OF THE CHILD. The child born to great issues, and therefore must run the gauntlet of peril. Compare Jesus under the edict of Herod with Moses under that of Pharaoh. No sooner born than a battle for life. The two only infants, but full of possibilities. Pharaoh! the babe you may crush; hereafter the man shall ruin you. A seeming law in the case, to which witness the legends of many nations, e.g. Romulus and Remus, Cyrus, King Arthur.

IV. LOVE FENCING FOR THE CHILD. 1. *Of the mother.* (1) Concealing. Heb. xi. 23. How by faith? Went right on in the discharge of *common duty* to the child, not turning aside to observe the king's commandment. Then the love went to the other extreme:—(2) Exposing. Here narrate the facts, for which see the text and commentary above; e.g. impossibility of longer concealing a growing child, form and material of the ark, laid in a place of comparative safety, "in the flags" at "the lip of the river," the elements of danger—starvation, discovery—not crocodiles on the Tanitic branch of the river. But observe the feeling behind the facts. A mother's despair becoming hope, and then faith; but a faith *provident and workful*, for, living in the neighbourhood, she could not fail to know where the childless (so says tradition) princess was wont to bathe. *Just there* she placed the child. 2. *Of the sister.* Imagine her anxiety! The mother-heart in every girl. She was (1) Watchful: over the ark, against an enemy, for the princess; (2) Active; (3) Clever, full of resource; (4) Successful; (5) Became eminent; a prophetess, Ex. xv. 20. One of the three deliverers, Micah vi. 4. The adored of the people, Num. xii. 10—15. In childhood are laid the foundations of character. 3. *Of God.* Before all, over all, and behind all! Love to the child, sister, parents, to Israel, and to the world to be blest through him.

V. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE CHILD. This of God, but note the part played by each of the following instruments:—1. *The princess.* Note the independent status of an Egyptian princess, the custom then of bathing in the open river, the probable locality, Zoan (Ps. lxxviii. 43), that compassion was inculcated by the Egyptian religion, and the probable application to her of Acts x. 35. 2. *The sister.* 3. *The mother.* 4. *The princess* again; and possible lifelong parting from the mother.

Finally, observe—1. *The deliverances of God are wonderful.* Only one person in all the land of Egypt that could save Moses, and she came to the river. 2. *The object of God's deliverances does not centre and rest on the delivered.* It passes beyond: Moses for Israel, Israel for the Messiah, Messiah for the world. So Abraham, Gen. xii. 2. So with elect spirits and elect nations in all ages. None for himself. 3. *So is it with the great salvation.* Wonderful! The benediction thereof unrelaxing, passing on from the first recipients. 4. *But the retributions of God are just as marvellous.* Moses was to be the ruin of the house of Pharaoh, and deservedly so. But in the providence of God the tyrant is made to pass by and even protect the instrument of his future punishment.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 11—15.—FIRST ATTEMPT OF MOSES TO DELIVER HIS NATION, AND ITS FAILURE. After Moses was grown up—according to the tradition accepted by St. Stephen (Acts vii. 23), when he was "full forty years old"

—having become by some means or other acquainted with the circumstances of his birth, which had most probably never been concealed from him, he determined to "go out" to his brethren, see with his own eyes what

their treatment was, and do his best to alleviate it. He had as yet no Divine mission, no command from God to act as he did, but only a natural sympathy with his people, and a feeling perhaps that in his position he was bound, more than any one else, to make some efforts to ameliorate what must have been generally known to be a hard lot. It is scarcely likely that he had formed any definite plans. How he should act would depend on what he should see. Thus far, his conduct deserves nothing but praise. It only perhaps a little surprises us (if St. Stephen's tradition accords with fact) that he did not earlier in his life take some steps in the direction here indicated. We are bound to recollect, however, that we know very little of the restraints under which he would have been laid—whether a severe law of etiquette, or the commands of his benefactress, may not have hampered him, and caused the long delay which strikes us as strange. Living with the court—in Tanis probably—he would have been required to make a strong effort—to break through an established routine, and strike out for himself a new and unheard-of course, if he quitted the princess's household to make a tour of inspection among the enslaved Hebrews. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to consider that his act in “going out” to “look upon the burdens” of his people involved a renunciation of his court life—a refusal to be called any more the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. xi. 24); a casting-in of his lot with his brethren, so as thenceforth to be a sharer in their afflictions (ib. ver. 24). If this were so, we can well understand a long period of hesitation before the resolve was made to take the course from which there was no retreating.

Ver. 11.—When Moses was grown. “When he had become a man of vigour and intelligence” (Kalisch). He went out. The expression is emphatic, and accords with the view above exhibited—that a complete change in the life of Moses was now effected, that the court was quitted, with its attractions and its temptations, its riches and its pleasures; and the position of adopted child of a princess forfeited. He spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew. “It is not certain that this was one of the “taskmasters” (ch. i. 11); but most probably he was either a taskmaster, or one of the officers employed by them. Such persons are on the Egyptian monuments represented as armed with long rods, said to be “made of

a tough pliant wood imported from Syria” (Chabas, ‘Voyage d'un Egyptien,’ p. 119). It was their right to employ their rods on the backs of the idle, a right which was sure to degenerate in many cases into tyrannous and cruel oppression. We may assume that it was an instance of such abuse of power that excited the anger of Moses; “seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed” (Acts vii. 24). For a light fault, or no fault at all, a heavy chastisement was being inflicted.

Ver. 12.—He looked this way and that way. Passion did not so move him as to make him reckless. He looked round to see that he was not observed, and then, when he saw there was no man, slew the Egyptian. A wrongful act, the outcome of an ardent but undisciplined spirit; not to be placed among the deeds “which history records as noble and magnanimous” (Kalisch), but among those which are hasty and regrettable. A warm sympathetic nature, an indignant hatred of wrong-doing, may have lain at the root of the crime, but do not justify it, though they may qualify our condemnation of it. (See the remarks of St. Augustine quoted by Keil and Delitzsch, ‘Commentary on the Pentateuch,’ vol. i. p. 451: “I affirm that the man, though criminal and really the offender, ought not to have been put to death by one who had no legal authority to do so. But minds that are capable of virtue often produce vices also, and show thereby for what virtue they would have been best adapted, if they had but been properly trained,” etc.) And hid him in the sand. There is abundant “sand” in the “field of Zoan,” and in all the more eastern portion of the land of Goshen. (See the ‘Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund’ for July, 1880, p. 140.)

Ver. 13.—The second day. I.e. “the following day.” See Acts vii. 26. Him that did the wrong. Literally, “the wicked one.” Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? Literally “thy neighbour.” In interposing here Moses certainly did nothing but what was right. The strife was one in which blows were being exchanged, and it is the duty of everyone in such a case, by persuasion at any rate, to seek to stop the combat.

Ver. 14.—Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? It was not his interference now, but his wrongful act of the day before, that exposed Moses to this rebuke. There was no assumption of lordship or of judicial authority in the bare inquiry, “Why smitest thou thy neighbour?” nor in the fuller phrase reported by St. Stephen, “Sirs, ye are brethren. Why do ye wrong one to another?” (Acts vii. 26), unless as coupled with the deed of the preceding day. Thus the violence of to-day renders of no avail the loving persuasion of to-morrow; the influence for good which

the education and position of Moses might have enabled him to exercise upon his nation was lost by the very act to which he had been urged by his sympathy with them: it was an act which could be thrown in his teeth, an act which he could not justify, which he trembled to find was known. The retort of the aggressor stopped his mouth at once, and made his interposition valueless.

Ver. 15.—Pharaoh heard. If we have been right in supposing the Pharaoh of the original oppression to have been Seti I., the present Pharaoh, from whom Moses flies when he is "full forty years old" (Acts vii. 23), and who does not die till Moses is near eighty, must be his son, the Great Rameses, Rameses II. This prince was associated by his father at the age of ten or twelve (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. pp. 24—5), and reigned sixty-seven years, as appears from his monuments. He is the only king of the New Empire whose real reign exceeded forty years, and thus the only monarch who fulfils the conditions required by the narrative of Exodus supplemented by St. Stephen's speech in the Acts. He sought to slay Moses. We need not understand from this expression that the Pharaoh's will was thwarted or opposed by anything but the sudden disappearance of Moses. As St. Stephen says (Acts vii. 23), "Then fled Moses at this saying," i.e. at the mere words of the aggressor, "Wilt thou slay me as thou didst the

Egyptian?" Moses fled, knowing what he had to expect, quitted Egypt, went to Midian; and the Egyptian monarch "sought to slay him" too late. The land of Midian is a somewhat vague expression, for the Midianites were nomads, and at different times occupied distinct and even remote localities. Their principal settlements appear to have been on the eastern side of the Elanitic Gulf (Gulf of Akabah); but at times they extended northwards to the confines of Moab (Gen. xxxvi. 35; Num. xxii. 4, 7, etc.), and westward into the Sinaitic peninsula, which appears to have been "the land of Midian" whereto Moses fled (see below, ch. iii. 1). The Midianites are not expressly mentioned in the Egyptian inscriptions. They were probably included among the Mentu, with whom the Egyptians contended in the Sinaitic region, and from whom they took the copper district north-west of Sinai. And he sat down by a well. Rather "and he dwelt by the well." He took up his abode in the neighbourhood of the principal well belonging to the tract here called Midian. The tract was probably one of no great size, an offshoot of the greater Midian on the other side of the gulf. We cannot identify the well; but it was certainly not that near the town of Modiana, spoken of by Edrisi and Abulfeda, which was in Arabia Proper, on the east of the gulf.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 11, 12.—§ 1. *Moses as a would-be deliverer.* Moses, as a would-be deliverer, shows us how zeal may outrun discretion. Actuated by deep love for his brethren, he had quitted the court, resigned his high prospects, thrown in his lot with his nation, and "gone out" to see with his own eyes their condition. No doubt he came upon many sights which vexed and angered him, but was able to restrain himself. At last, however, he became witness of a grievous—an extreme—case of oppression. Some Hebrew, we may suppose, weaker than the generality, delicate in constitution or suffering from illness, rested awhile from his weary labour under the scorching sun, and gave himself a few moments of delightful, because rare, repose. But the eye of the taskmaster was on him. Suddenly his rest was interrupted by a shower of severe blows, which were rained pitilessly upon his almost naked frame, raising great wheals, from which the blood streamed down in frequent heavy drops. Moses could no longer contain himself. Pity for the victim and hatred of the oppressor surged up in his heart. "Many a time and oft" had he wished to be a deliverer of his brethren, to revenge their wrongs, to save them from their sufferings. Here was an opportunity to make a beginning. He would save at any rate this one victim, he would punish this one wrongdoer. There was no danger, for no one was looking (ver. 12), and surely the man whom he saved would not betray him. So, having a weapon in his belt, or finding one ready to his hand—a stone, it may be, or a working man's implement—he raised it, and striking a swift strong blow, slew the Egyptian. In thus acting he was doubly wrong. He acted as an avenger, when he had no authority from God or man to be one; and, had he had authority, still he would have inflicted a punishment disproportionate to the offence. Such a beating as he had himself administered the taskmaster may have deserved, but not to be cut off in his sins; not to be sent to his last account without warning, without time even for a repentant

thought. The deed done, conscience reasserted herself: it was a deed of darkness; a thing which must be concealed: so Moses dug a hole in the sand, and hid the dreadful evidence of his crime. It does not appear that the man whom he had delivered helped him; he was perhaps too much exhausted with what he had suffered, and glad to creep to his home. Moses, too, returned to his own abode, well satisfied, as it would seem, on the whole, with what he had done. Having struck the blow, and buried the body unseen, he did not fear detection; and he probably persuaded himself that the man deserved his fate. He may have even had self-complacent thoughts, have admired his own courage and strength, and thought how he had at last come to be a deliverer indeed. In reality, however, he had disqualified himself for the office; he had committed a crime which forced him to quit his brethren and fly to a distance, and be thus unable to do anything towards mitigating their sufferings for the space of forty years! Had he been patient, had he been content with remonstrances, had he used his superior strength to rescue the oppressed without injuring the oppressor, he would have shown himself fit to be a deliverer, and God might not improbably have assigned him his mission at once. But his self-willed and wrongful mode of proceeding showed that he needed a long course of discipline before he could properly be entrusted with the difficult task which God designed him to accomplish. Forty years of almost solitary life in the Sinaitic wilderness chastened the hot spirit which was now too wild and untamed for a leader and governor of men.

Vers. 13--14.—§ 2. *Moses as a peacemaker.* A great sin disqualifies a man for many a long year from setting himself up to be a guide and teacher of others. It may at any time be *thrown in his teeth*. Nothing could be better intended than the efforts of Moses, on the day after his crime, to compose the quarrels of his brethren, and set the disputants at one. Nor is he fairly taxable with any want of equity, or even of tact, in the manner in which he set to work. He rebuked "him that did the wrong." His rebuke was mild in character—a mere expostulation; "Wherefore smitest thou," etc. Nay, according to St. Stephen (Acts vii. 26), it was not even an expostulation addressed to an individual, but a general address which avoided the assignment of special blame to either disputant. "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" Yet it had no effect; it failed utterly. The tables were at once turned on the expostulator by the inquiry, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to slay me as thou didst the Egyptian?" Conscience makes cowards of us all. Moses, hearing this, had no more to say; he had essayed to pluck out the mote from his brother's eye, and behold! the beam was in his own eye. His brethren were quarrelsome and injurious; but he—he was a murderer.

Ver. 15.—§ 3. *Moses as a fugitive.* Men's sins are sure to "find them out." Moses had thought that he would not be detected. He had carefully "looked this way and that way" ere he struck the blow, and had seen "that there was no man." He had at once hidden the body of his victim underground. He had concluded that the Hebrew whom he had delivered from the oppressor would keep silence; if from no other reason, yet at any rate to save himself from being suspected. But the man, it appears, had chattered. Perhaps from no ill motive, but simply from inability to keep a secret. He had told his wife, or his daughter, or his neighbour; and at once "the thing was known." While Moses imagined his deed shrouded in deepest secrecy, it was the general talk. All the Hebrews knew of it; and soon the Egyptians knew also. Presently it came to the ears of the king, whose business it was to punish crime, and who, naturally and rightfully, "sought to slay Moses." But he had fled away; he had put seas and deserts between himself and the royal vengeance; he was a refugee in Midian. So, though he escaped the public execution which Egyptian law awarded to his crime, he had to expiate it by forty years of exile and of hard service, a hireling shepherd tending the flock of another man.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The choice of Moses.* Underlying this episode of killing the Egyptian there is that crisis in the history of Moses to which reference is made so strikingly in the eleventh of the Hebrews—"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather," etc. (Heb. xi. 24—27). Two views may be taken of the episode. Either, as might be held, the elements of decision were floating in an unfixed state in the mind of Moses, when this event happened, and precipitated a choice; or, what seems more likely, the choice had already been made, and the resolution of Moses already taken, and this was but the first outward manifestation of it. In either case, the act in question was a deliberate committal of himself to his brethren's side—the crossing of the Rubicon, which necessitated thereafter a casting-in of his lot with theirs. View this choice of Moses—

I. AS A RESULT OF MENTAL AND MORAL AWAKENING. "When Moses was grown." With years came thought; with thought "the philosophic mind;" with this, power of observation. Moses began to think for himself, to see things with his own eyes. What he saw made evident to him the impossibility of halting longer between two opinions. He had not before felt the same necessity of definitely making up his mind whether he would be Hebrew or Egyptian. He had not seen in the same way the impossibility of retaining a sort of connection with both—sympathising with the Hebrews, yet enjoying Egypt's pleasures. Now there came awakening. The two spheres of life fell apart to his vision in their manifest incongruity—in their painful, and even, in some respects, hideous contrast. He may now be Hebrew or Egyptian; he can no longer be *both*. Up to this time choice could be staved off. Now it is forced upon him. To determine now not to choose, would be to choose for Egypt. He knows his duty, and it is for him to decide whether or not he will do it. And such in substance is the effect of moral awakening generally. 1. In most lives there is a time of thoughtlessness, at least of want of serious and independent reflection. It is not at this stage seen why religion should require so *very* decided a choice. God and the world seem not absolute incompatibles. It is possible to serve both; to agree with both. Christ's teaching to the contrary sounds strangely on the ears. 2. But an awakening comes, and it is now seen very clearly that this double service is impossible. The friendship of the world is felt to be enmity with God (Jas. iv. 4). The contrariety, utter and absolute, between what is in the world and love of the Father (John ii. 15) is manifest beyond dispute. Then comes the need for choice. God or the creature; Christ, or the world which crucified him; God's people or the friendship of those who deride and despise them. There is no longer room for dallying. Not to choose is already to have chosen wrongly—to have decided for the world, and rejected Christ.

II. AS A VICTORY OVER STRONG TEMPTATION. It was no slight victory over the temptations of his position for Moses to renounce all at the call of duty, and cast in his lot with an oppressed and despised race. His temptation was obviously a typical one, including in it everything which tempts men still to refrain from religious decision, and to dissemble relationship to Christ and connection with his people; and his victory was also typical, reminding us of his who became poor that we might be rich (2 Cor. viii. 7), and who put aside "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," when offered him on sinful terms (Matt. iv. 8—10). View it—1. As *a victory over the world*. Moses knew his advantages at the court of Pharaoh, and doubtless felt the full value of them. Egypt was to him the world. It represented to his mind (1) Wealth and position. (2) Ease and luxury. (3) Brilliant worldly prospects. (4) A sphere congenial to him as a man of studious tastes. And all this he voluntarily surrendered at the call of duty—surrendered it both in spirit and in fact. And are not we, as Christians, called also to surrender of the world? Renouncing the world, indeed, is not monkery. It is not the thoughtless flinging away of worldly advantages. But neither is it the mere renouncing of what is *sinful* in the world. It is the renouncing of it *wholly*, so far as use of it for selfish ends or selfish enjoyment is concerned: the sinking of its ease, its pleasures, its possessions, in entire self-surrender to Christ and duty. And this carries with it the ability for any outward sacrifice that may be needed. 2. As *a victory over the dread of reproach*. In renouncing Egypt,

Moses chose that which the multitudes shun as almost worse than death itself, viz. (1) Poverty. (2) Reproach. Yet how many stumble at reproach in the service of the Saviour! A measure of reproach is implied in all earnest religious profession. And it requires courage to face it—to encounter the moral crucifixion involved in being flouted and scouted by the world. It is when “tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word” that “by and by” many are “offended” (Matt. xiii. 21). Yet to be able to encounter reproach is the true moral greatness—the mark of the spiritual hero. 3. As *a victory over private feelings and inclinations*. Not only was there much about his life in Egypt which Moses dearly loved (leisure, opportunities for self-culture, etc.); but there must have been much about the Hebrews which, to a man of his courtly up-bringing, would necessarily be repulsive (coarseness of manners, servility of disposition, etc.). Yet he cheerfully cast in his lot with them, taking this as part of his cross. A lesson for people of culture. He who would serve God or humanity must lay his account for much he does not like. Every reformer, every earnest servant of mankind, has to make this sacrifice. He must not be ashamed to call those “brethren” who are yet in every way “compassed with infirmity,” about whom there is much that is positively distasteful. Here also, “no cross, no crown.”

III. AS AN ACT OF RELIGIOUS FAITH. The determining motives in Moses' choice were—1. *Patriotism*. This people was his people, and his blood boiled with indignation at the wrongs they were enduring. Only a nature dead to the last spark of nobleness could have reconciled itself to look on their sufferings and yet eat bread and retain favour at the court of their oppressor. 2. *Humanity*. “There was in him that nobleness of nature, which besides tending to sympathy with the oppressed, revolts from all that is selfish and cruel; and this nobleness was stirred up in him by seeing the state of his kindred, and comparing it with his own. This was his faith. Faith saved him from being content to be idle and useless, and gave him zeal and courage to play the part of a man and a hero in the liberation of his people” (Dr. J. Service). 3. *Religion*. We fail of a right view of Moses' conduct if we stop short of religious faith proper. Moses knew something of the history of his people. He knew them to be the people of God. He knew of the covenants and promises. He knew of their religious hopes. And it was this which weighed most of all with him in casting in his lot among them, and enabled him to count their reproach greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. His faith was—(1) Faith in God. He believed in the God of his fathers, and in the truth and certainty of his promise. (2) Faith in the spiritual greatness of his nation. He saw in these Hebrews, sweat-covered, down-trodden, afflicted as they were, the “people of God.” Faith is not misled by the shows of things. It pierces to the reality. (3) Faith in duty. “It is of the essence of faith that he who has it feels himself to be in a world of better things than pleasures, whether innocent or sinful, which are only pleasures of sense; and in which to be right is greater and better than to be mighty or to be rich—feels, in a word, that the best of this life, and of all life, is goodness” (Dr. J. Service). (4.) Faith in the recompense of reward. Moses believed in future recompense—in immortality. A cardinal doctrine, even in Egyptian theology, it can scarcely be supposed to have been absent from his. How great was the reward of Moses, even in this life! “He was happier as the persecuted and despised worshipper of Jehovah, the avowed kinsman of slaves, than as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and the admired proficient in all Egyptian wisdom. He felt that he was richer, despoiled of the treasures of Egypt. He felt that he was happier, divorced from the pleasures of sin. He felt that he was freer, reduced to the bondage of his countrymen. He was richer, because enriched with the treasures of grace; happier, because blessed with the smiles of an approving conscience; freer, because enfranchised with the liberty of the sons of God. The blessings he chose were richer than all the advantages he cast away” (Lindsay). How great has been his reward in history! “For ages past his name has outshone all the monarchs combined of the one-and-thirty dynasties” (Hamilton). But the eternal reward has been greatest of all. A glimpse of it in the glorious reappearance of Moses on the mountain of transfiguration. Wise choice, for honours like these to surrender riches and pleasures which were perishable! Through faith in God, Christ, duty, and eternity, let the same noble choice be repeated in ourselves!

J. O.

Vers. 11—15.—*Unfruitful effort.* I. MOSES' SELF-SACRIFICE (Heb. xi. 24—26). 1. He owned his relationship to the enslaved and hated people. 2. He cast in his lot among them. God calls for the same sacrifice to-day; confession of Jesus and brotherhood with his people. 3. The result of a mother's influence: from her he must have learned the truth regarding his descent and the hope of Israel. The seed sown outlived the luxury, temptations, ambitions of the court. God's blessing rests on these efforts of holiest love.

II. THE LESSONS OF HIS FAILURE. 1. True desire to serve is not the only requisite for success. We may be defeated by mistakes of judgment, an ungoverned temper, etc. 2. There can be no true service without the heart's waiting upon God. In order to guide we ourselves must follow. 3. The power which does not wait upon God comes to nothing. Contrast the prince with the unknown wanderer in Midian. Not only were means and influence lost, his very opportunity was gone. "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."—U.

Vers. 11—15.—*Unpurified zeal.* We must certainly attribute the killing of the Egyptian, not to Divine inspiration, but to the natural impetuosity of Moses' character. At this stage Moses had zeal, but it was without knowledge. His heart burned with indignation at the wrongs of his brethren. He longed to be their deliverer. Something told him that "God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts vii. 25). But how to proceed he knew not. His plans had taken no definite shape. There was no revelation, and perhaps one was not expected. So, acting under impulse, he struck the blow which killed the Egyptian, but did no service to the cause he had at heart. That he did not act with moral clearness is manifest from the perturbation with which he did the deed, and from his subsequent attempt to hide the traces of it. It completed his discomfiture when, next day, he learned that the deed was known, and that his brethren, instead of welcoming his interposition, were disposed to resent it. He had involved himself in murder. He had sown the seeds of later troubles. Yet he had gained no end by it. How true it is that violence seldom leads to happy issues! "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jas. i. 20). An exhibition of violence on our own part is a bad preparation for interfering in the quarrels of others. He that does the wrong will rarely fail to remind us of it. Learn lessons from the narrative—

I. AS TO THE CHARACTER OF MOSES. Moses, like every man of true, powerful, and loving nature, was capable of vehement and burning anger. He was a man of great natural impetuosity. This casts light upon the sin of Meribah (Num. xx. 10). An outbreak of the old, long-conquered failing (cf. ch. iv. 13). The holier side of the same disposition is seen in the anger with which he broke in pieces the Tables of the Law (Ex. xxxii. 19). It casts light also on his meekness, and teaches us to distinguish meekness from mere natural placableness and amiability. Meekness—the meekness for which Moses is famed (Num. xii. 3)—was not a gift of nature, but the result of passions, naturally strong, conquered and controlled—of long and studied self-repression.

II. AS TO UNPURIFIED ZEAL. 1. *Unpurified zeal leads to hasty action.* It is ungoverned. It acts from impulse. It is not schooled to bearing and waiting. It cannot bide God's time, nor keep to God's ways. 2. *Unpurified zeal unfits for God's service.* It relies too much on self. It takes events into its own hand. Hence Moses is sent to Midian to spend forty years in learning humility and patience—in acquiring power of self-control. He has to learn that the work is not his, but God's, and that only God can accomplish it. 3. *Unpurified zeal, by its hasty action, retards, rather than furthers, the accomplishment of God's purposes.* By driving Moses into Midian, it probably put back the hour of Israel's deliverance.—J. O.

Vers. 11—12.—*Moses, the ardent but mistaken patriot.* We are not told much of Moses in the first forty years of his life, just as we are not told much of Jesus before he began his public ministry; but as it is with Jesus, so it is with Moses—that we are told is full of light concerning their character, disposition, and thoughts of the future. Just one action may be enough to show the stuff a man is made of. Moses, grown to manhood, by this single action of killing the Egyptian makes clearly

manifest his spirit and his sympathies; shows to us in a very impressive way much that was good, and much also that was evil.

I. CONSIDER THE CONDUCT OF MOSES HERE AS CASTING LIGHT UPON CERTAIN QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE WORK TO WHICH HE WAS AFTERWARDS CALLED. 1. *Though he had been brought up amid Egyptian surroundings, he remained an Israelite in heart.* Very early he must have been made acquainted, in some way or other, with the strange romance that belonged to his infancy. Whatever Pharaoh's daughter brought to bear on him in the way of Egyptian influence one day, would be neutralised by what he heard from his own mother the next. For it was not likely that, after he was able to understand it, his nurse would long conceal the fact that she was his true mother. Perhaps the very ark of bulrushes had become one of his treasured possessions. His name, once explained, was a continual memento of infantile peril and deliverance. And as he grew onward to manhood, he would be inclined to reproach himself again and again for living so easily and comfortably with Pharaoh's daughter, while her father was treating with such harshness and injustice his own people, his own kinsfolk—Aaron his own brother being probably among them. Thus there was everything to keep the state of Israel incessantly in his mind; everything in the way of good soil to make the seed of patriotism grow, if only the seed were in his nature to begin with. And there it unquestionably was, growing with his growth and strengthening with his strength. 2. *It is very important to notice how clearly the vicarious element comes out in the relation of Moses to Israel during the years he spent with Pharaoh's daughter.* In one sense, he did not suffer himself. His life was not made "bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." No taskmaster ever smote him. And yet, in another sense, he suffered perhaps even more than any of the Israelites. There are burdens of the spirit which produce a groaning and prostration far worse than those of any bodily toil. There is a laceration of the heart more painful, and harder to heal, than that of any bodily wound. Moses felt the sorrows of Israel as if they were his own. In all their affliction he was afflicted. Not one of them smarted more under a sense of the injustice with which they were treated than he did. It is a most precious, ennobling and fruitful feeling to have in the heart—this feeling which links the unsuffering to the suffering in a bond not to be broken. It brings together those who have the opportunity to deliver, and those who, fastened hand and foot, can do nothing for themselves. We find this feeling, in its purest, most operative, and most valuable expression in Jesus, in him who knew no sin, no defiling thoughts, no torture of conscience for his own wrong-doing; and who yet came to feel so deeply the misery and helplessness of a fallen world, that he descended into it for its deliverance, having an unspeakably keener sense of its calamities than the most observant and meditative of its own children. It is a grand thing to have this element of vicarious suffering in our hearts; for the more we have it the more we are able to follow Jesus in serving our needy fellow-men. Moses had this element; the prophets had it; Paul had it; every true and successful apostle and evangelist must have it (Rom. ix. 1—5). Every Christian in process of salvation should have this element as he looks round on those still ignorant and out of the way. The civilised should have it as he looks on the savage; the freeman as he looks on the slave; the healthy as he looks on the sick; the man as he looks on the brute creation. This element of vicarious suffering has been at the root of some of the noblest and most useful lives in all ages, and not least in modern times. A thousand times let us run the risk of being called sentimental and maudlin, rather than lack the element or cripple it in its vigorous growth. Certain it is, that we shall do but little for Christ without it. 3. *We have a very suggestive intimation of the superiority of Moses to the people whom he was about to deliver; this superiority being not a mere matter of greater social advantages, but arising out of personal character.* The brother whom he succoured treated him but badly in return. He did not mean to treat him badly; but simple thoughtlessness makes untold mischief. He must have known that Moses wished the act kept a secret, yet in a few hours it is known far and wide through Israel. Not all might have been so inconsiderate, but assuredly most would; and so this man may be taken as representative of his people. He had not the courage and energy to return the Egyptian's blow himself; nor had he the activity and forethought of mind to shelter the generous champion who did return

the blow. Israel was in servitude altogether; not only in body, but in all the nobler faculties of life as well. Hence, if Israel was to be saved, it must be by the condescending act of a superior and stronger hand. And thus Moses slaying the Egyptian shadows forth a prime requirement in the greater matter of the world's redemption. Unless the Son of God had stooped from his brighter, holier sphere, to break the bonds of sin and death, what could we poor slaves have done?

II. CONSIDER THE CONDUCT OF MOSES HERE AS INDICATING THE PRESENCE IN HIM OF GREAT DEFECTS WHICH REQUIRED MUCH DISCIPLINE AND ENLIGHTENMENT TO REMOVE THEM. Moses, in respect of his ardent and sustained sympathy with Israel, was a man after God's own heart; but he had everything yet to learn as to how that sympathy was to be made truly serviceable. His patriotism, strong and operative as it had proved, was produced by entirely wrong considerations. His profound and fervent interest in Israel was a right feeling, and an indispensable one for his work; but it needed to be produced by quite different agencies, and directed to quite different ends. How had the feeling been produced? Simply by observing the cruelties inflicted on his brethren. He slew the Egyptian simply because he smote his brother, not because that brother belonged to the chosen people of God. The thing wanted was that he should come to understand clearly the connection of Israel with God, their origin and their destiny. He was to sympathise with Israel, not only as his brethren, but first and chiefly as the people of God. *Patriotism is a blessing or a curse just according to the form it takes.* If it begins to say, "Our country, right or wrong," then it is one of the greatest curses a nation can be afflicted with. Arrogance, conceit, and exorbitant self-assertion are as hideous in a nation as in an individual, and in the end correspondingly disastrous. *Our greatest sympathy with men is wanted in that which affects them most deeply and abidingly.* Sympathy has no full right to the name till it is the sympathy of forgiven sinners who are being sanctified and perfected, with those who are not only sinners, but still in the bondage of sin, and perhaps hardly conscious of the degradation of the bondage, and the firmness with which its fetters are fixed. Moses did not know how much his brethren were losing, because he did not know how much he himself was still lacking, even though in such comfortable freedom at Pharaoh's court. In his eyes, the main thing to be done for Israel was to get them freedom, independence, self-control in this world's affairs. And therefore it was necessary for God to effect a complete and abiding change in Moses' way of thinking. He needed to be made better acquainted with God, and with God's past revelations, and expressed purposes for Israel. Slaying the Egyptian did not advance the real interests of Israel a whit, except as God wove the action in with his own far-reaching plans. Considered purely as a human action, it was an aimless one, fruitful of evil rather than good. It was natural enough and excusable enough; but the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; and thus Moses in his carnal impetuosity made clear how dependent he was to be upon God for a really wise, comprehensive, practical plan of action. In the providence of God he was to come back to Israel, not to deal with some obscure subordinate, but with a Pharaoh himself; not to take the sword into his own hands, but to stand still himself, and make the people stand still also, that he and they together might see the salvation of God.—Y.

Vers. 13—15.—*Moses the hater of all oppression.* I. WE HAVE HERE FURTHER IMPORTANT REVELATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE CHARACTER OF MOSES AND HIS FITNESS TO BE DELIVERER OF ISRAEL. 1. It is evident that his conscience did not accuse him, as touching the slaying of the Egyptian. Wrong as the action was, he made it clear that he had done it from a right motive. Although he had taken the life of a fellow-man, he had taken it not as a murderer, with malice in his heart against the individual, but as a patriot. Hence the conscience that makes cowards of us all—the consciousness, that is, of having done a wrong thing—was absent from his breast. It is a very great matter indeed not to go against conscience. Let conscience have life and authority, and God will take his own time and means to cure the blinded understanding. 2. *Moses felt continued interest in the state of Israel.* He went out the second day. He did not say, upon reflection, that these visits to his brethren were too perilous to be continued. He did not say, "I cannot trust my own indignant feelings, and therefore I must keep away from these oppressed countrymen of mine." His heart was wholly and steadily

with them. Interest may be easily produced while the exhibition of an injury is fresh, or the emotions are excited by some skilful speaker. But we do not want the heart to be like an instrument, only producing music so long as the performer touches it. We want it to have such a continued activity within, such a continued thoughtfulness, as will maintain a noble and alert sympathy with men in all their varied and incessant needs. 3. *The conduct of Moses here shows that he was a hater of all oppression.* His patriotic feeling had been excited by the Egyptian smiting the Hebrew, and now his natural sense of justice was outraged by seeing one Hebrew smiting another. He beheld these men the victims of a common oppression, and yet one of them who happens to be the stronger adds to the already existing sufferings of his weaker brother instead of doing what he can to diminish them. The patriotism of Moses, even with all its yet unremedied defects, was founded not only in community of blood, but in a deep and ardent love for all human rights. We may conclude that if Moses had been an Egyptian, he would not have joined Pharaoh in his remorseless treatment of Israel, nor seconded a policy of oppression and diminution on the plea that it was one of necessity. If the Egyptians had been under the thralldom of the Hebrews, then, Hebrew though he was, he would have sympathised with the Egyptians.

II. CONSIDER THE OCCASION OF HIS REMONSTRANCE. It is a sad lesson Moses has now to learn, that the oppressed will be the oppressors, if only they can get the chance. Here we are in the world, all sinners together, with certain outward consequences of sin prevalent amongst us in the shape of poverty and sickness, and all such trials onward to death. Right feeling should teach us, in these circumstances, to stand by one another, to bear one another's burdens and do what we can, by union and true brotherliness, to mitigate the oppressions of our great enemy. While he is going about seeking whom he may devour, we, his meditated prey, might well refrain from biting and devouring one another. But what is the real state of things? The rich sinner afflicts the poor, and too often uses him in his helplessness for his own aggrandisement. The strong sinner is always on the look-out to make as much as he can out of every sort of weakness among his fellow-sinners. And what is worse still, when the sinner professes to have passed from death unto life, he does not always show the full evidence of it in loving the brethren as he is bound to do (1 John iii. 14). Some professed Christians take a long time to perceive, and some never perceive at all, that even simple self-indulgence is not only hurtful to self, but an ever-flowing spring of untold misery to others.

III. CONSIDER THE REMONSTRANCE ITSELF. 1. *Notice the person whom Moses addresses.* "He said to him that did the wrong." He does not pretend to come forward as knowing nothing of the merits of the quarrel. He does not content himself with dwelling in general terms on the unseemliness of a dispute between brethren who are also the victims of a common oppressor. It is not enough for him simply to beseech the disputants to be reconciled. One is clearly in the wrong, and Moses does not hesitate by implication to condemn him. Thus there appears in Moses a certain disposition towards the judicial mind, revealing the germs of another qualification for the work of his after-life. For the judicial mind is not only that which strives to bring out all the evidence in matters of right or wrong, and so to arrive at a correct conclusion; it is also a mind which has the courage to act on its conclusions, and without fear or favour pass the necessary sentence. By addressing one of these men rather than the other, Moses does in a manner declare himself perfectly satisfied that he is in the wrong. 2. *Notice the question which Moses puts.* He smote the Egyptian; he expostulated with the Hebrew. The smiting of one Hebrew by another was evidently very unnatural conduct in the eyes of Moses. When we consider *what men are*, there is of course nothing astonishing in the conduct of this domineering Israelite; he is but seizing the chance which thousands of others in a like temptation would have seized. But when we consider *what men ought to be*, there was great reason for Moses to ask his question, "Why smitest thou thy fellow?" Why indeed! There was no true reason he could give but what it was a shame to confess. And so we might often say to a wrong-doer, "Why dost thou this or that?" according to the particular wrong he is committing. "Why?" There might be great virtue in this persistent interrogation if only put in a spirit purged as far as possible from the censorious and the meddlesome. What a man does carelessly enough and with much satisfaction, upon the

low consideration of self-indulgence, he might come to forsake if only brought face to face with high considerations of duty and love, and of conformity to the will of God and example of Christ. Everything we do ought to have a sufficient reason for it. Not that we are to be in a perpetual fidget over minute scruples. But, being by nature so ignorant, and by training so bound-in with base traditions, we cannot too often or too promptly ask ourselves whether we have indeed a sufficient reason for the chief principles, occupations and habits of life. 3. Notice that the question put to the Hebrew wrong-doer might just as well have been put to the Egyptian. He also had been guilty of indefensible conduct, yet he as well as the other was a man with powers of reflection, and the timely question, "Why smitest thou this Hebrew?" might have made him consider that really he had no sufficient reason at all to smite him. We must not too readily assume that enemies will persist in enmity, if only we approach them in a friendly manner. He that would change an enemy into a friend must show himself friendly. The plan may not always be successful; but it is worth trying to conquer our foes by love, patience and meekness. We must ever strive to get the selfish people to think, their thinking powers and all the better part of their humanity only too often get crushed into a corner before the rush of pride, appetite and passion.

IV. CONSIDER THE RESULT OF THE REMONSTRANCE. The wrong-doer has no sufficient and justifying answer to give; and so he tells Moses to his face that he is a mere meddler. When men are in a right course, a course of high and generous aims, they hail any opportunity of presenting their conduct in a favourable aspect. But when they are doing wrong, then they make a pretence of asserting their independence and liberty in order that they may fight shy of awkward confessions. If we wait till we are never found fault with as meddlers we shall do very little to compose quarrels and redress injuries, to vindicate the innocent or deliver the oppressed. Men will listen to a general harangue against tyranny, injustice and selfishness. They will look at us with great admiration as long as we shoot our arrows in the air; but arrows are not meant to be shot in the air; they are meant, at the very least, to go right into the crowd of men, and sometimes to be directly and closely personal.—Y.

Vers. 11—15.—Moses "was grown." According to the tradition he had already distinguished himself as a warrior—was "a prince and a judge" amongst the Egyptians, if not over the Hebrews (ver. 14). Learned, too, in all the wisdom of the day (cf. Acts vii. 22). At his age, forty years, with his influence, surely if ever he was to do anything for his people, now must be the time. Notice:

I. THE HASTY MISCALCULATION OF THE MAN. 1. *What he did, and why he did it.* "It came into his heart to visit his brethren." In the seminaries of the priests, in the palace, with the army, he had not forgotten his people; but he had scarcely realised the bitterness of their trial. Now his heart burns within him as he looks upon their burdens. He feels that he is the appointed deliverer trained for this very purpose. What is so plain to him must, he thinks, be equally plain to others (Acts vii. 25). A chance encounter gives him the opportunity of declaring himself; defending a Hebrew, he kills an Egyptian. The supposition that his brethren will understand proves to be a great mistake: "they understood not." Moses did that which we are all too ready to do: took it for granted that other people would look at things from his standpoint. A man may be all that he thinks himself to be; but he will fail in accomplishing his designs if he makes their success depend upon other people taking him at his own estimate; there is an unsound premiss in his practical syllogism which will certainly vitiate the conclusion. What we *should* do is to take pains to place ourselves at the standpoint of other people, and before assuming that they see what we see, make sure that at any rate we see what they see. Moses, the courtier, could see the weakness of the oppressor, and how little power he had if only his slaves should rise; the slaves, however, bowing beneath the tyranny, felt and exaggerated the tyrant's power—they could not see much hope from the aid of this self-constituted champion. 2. *What followed from his deed.* Life endangered, compulsory flight, a refuge amongst shepherds in a strange land, forty years' comparative solitude, life's prospects blighted through impatience. "More haste worse speed" is one of the world's wise proverbial generalisations. Moses illustrates the proverb—*forty years' exile for an hour's hurry!*

II. THE OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will." The apparently wasted years not really wasted—no *needless* delay, only preparation and Divine discipline. Moses had learnt much, but he needed to learn more. God takes him from the *school of Egypt*, and places him in the *university of Nature*, with Time and Solitude and the Desert as his tutors. What did they teach him? 1. *The value of the knowledge gained already.* Well "to be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." But wisdom improves by keeping—it needs time and solitude to ripen it. Intellectually and spiritually we are ruminants; silence and solitude are needed to appropriate and digest knowledge. 2. *New knowledge.* Few books, if any, of man's making, but the books of Nature invited study. The knowledge of the desert would be needed by-and-bye, together with much other knowledge which could be gained nowhere else. 3. *Meekness.* He not merely became a wiser man, he grew to be also a better man. The old self-confidence yielded place to entire dependence upon the will of God. God had delivered him from the sword of Pharaoh (cf. ver. 15 with ch. xviii. 3), and would help him still, though in a strange land. Nothing makes a man so meek as faith; the more he realises God's presence and confides in him, the more utterly does the "consuming fire" burn out of him all pride and selfishness.

Application:—Turning the pages of the book of memory, what records of delay occasioned by impatience! Yet how do the same pages testify to the way in which all along God has shaped our ends! It is a mercy that we are in such good hands, and not left to our own devices. Trusting in God, we can hope to make the best even of our errors. He can restore—ay, more than restore—even years which the locust hath eaten (Joel ii. 25).—G.

Vers. 11—15.—Mistake in life's morning. "He supposed his brethren would have," etc. (Acts vii. 25). The heart-abandonment of the throne must have taken place before Moses went out from the palace of the princess to inquire, and therefore before the enforced flight. Place therefore "the crisis of being" between Exod. ii. 10 and 11. Let no one fear to face this error in the life of the Lord's servant. Admit frankly that Moses was wrong. We are embarrassed by a notion that clings to us, that the Bible is a repertory of good examples. It is not so. Only One perfect. All other men and women in the Bible are imperfect and sinful, the subjects of God's grace, pardoning, correcting, sanctifying, glorifying. Never lower the moral standard to defend a Bible character. It gives occasion to the adversary, and brings no satisfaction to the believer. In this chapter of the biography of Moses observe in his conduct—

I. THE RIGHT. 1. *Inquiry.* No inclination to shrink from responsibility under the plea of want of knowledge. See the striking passage, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. Moses going out to investigate for himself, argues that either his mother or his people, or both, had opened and maintained communication with him, informing him of his origin, teaching the doctrine of the true God, and awakening concern. 2. *Sympathy.* "He looked on their burdens." 3. *Indignation.* We may be angry and sin; but it is also true that we may not be angry, and sin even yet more deeply. For illustration cite modern instances of cruel oppression.

II. THE WRONG. 1. *Excess of indignant feeling.* 2. *Murder.* The "supposition" of Stephen is no justification, even if true; but it may not be true, or may be only partially true; for the utterance of Stephen, based on tradition, is not to be confounded with the inspired dictum of God. That furtive look "this way and that way" does not indicate an assured conscience. Note the true meaning and spirit of Rom. xiv. 23.

III. THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS. Failure—Peril—Fear—Flight—Delay of Israel's deliverance.

IV. THE FINAL OVERRULING. God originates no wrong, but, being done, lays on it the hand of the mighty. That enforced life in the desert became as important a part of the training of Moses as life at Avaris; acquainted him with "the Wilderness of the Wandering," its resources, mode of life; those other children of Abraham—the Midianites; gave him to wife a descendant of Abraham; led to an important policy for all the future of Israel (Ex. xviii.); and furnished an all-but-indispensable human helper and guide (Num. x. 29—31). Thus does the Eternal Mercy overrule and countervail the errors, even the sins, of penitent believers.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 16—22.—LIFE OF MOSES IN MIDIAN. Fugitives from Egypt generally took the northern route from Pelusium or Migdol to Gaza, and so to Syria, or the regions beyond. But in this quarter they were liable to be arrested and sent back to the Egyptian monarch. Rameses II. put a special clause to this effect into his treaty with the contemporary Hittite king (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 73). It was, perhaps, the fear of extradition which made Moses turn his steps south-eastward, and proceed along the route, or at any rate in the direction, which he afterwards took with his nation. Though Egypt had possessions in the Sinaitic peninsula, it was not difficult to avoid them; and before Sinai was reached the fugitive would be in complete safety, for the Egyptians seem never to have penetrated to the southern or eastern parts of the great triangle. "The well," by which Moses took up his abode, is placed with some probability in the neighbourhood of Sherm, about ten miles north-east of Ras Mahommed, the southern cape of the peninsula.

Ver. 16.—The priest of Midian. *Cohen* is certainly "priest" here, and not "prince," since the father-in-law of Moses exercises priestly functions in ch. xviii. 12. His seven daughters drew water for his flock, in accordance with Eastern custom. So Rachel "kept the sheep" of her father Laban, and watered them (Gen. xxix. 9). Such a practice agrees well with the simplicity of primitive times and peoples; nor would it even at the present day be regarded as strange in Arabia.

Ver. 17.—The shepherds came and drove them away. There is not much "natural politeness" among primitive peoples. The right of the stronger prevails, and women go to the wall. Even the daughters of their priest were not respected by these rude sons of the desert, who would not wait their turn, but used the water which Reuel's daughters had drawn. The context shows that this was not an accidental or occasional circumstance, but the regular practice of the shepherds, who thus day after day saved themselves the trouble of drawing. (See the next verse.) **Moses stood up and helped them.** Ever ready to assist the weak against the strong (*supra*, vers. 12, 13), Moses "stood up"—sprang to his feet—and, though only one man against a dozen or a score, by his determined air intimidated the crowd of wrong-doers, and forced them to let the maidens' sheep drink at the troughs. His dress was probably that of an Egyptian of rank; and they might reasonably

conclude from his boldness that he had attendants within call.

Ver. 18.—Reuel their father. Reuel is called "Raguel" in Num. x. 29, but the Hebrew spelling is the same in both places. The word means "friend of God," and implies monotheism. Compare ch. xviii. 9—12.

Ver. 19.—An Egyptian. Reuel's daughters judged by the outward appearance. Moses wore the garb and probably spoke the language of Egypt. He had had no occasion to reveal to them his real nationality. **Drew water enough for us.** The shepherds had consumed some of the water drawn by the maidens, before Moses could drive them off. He supplied the deficiency by drawing more for them—an act of polite attention.

Ver. 20.—Where is he? Reuel reproaches his daughters with a want of politeness—even of gratitude. Why have they "left the man"? Why have they not invited him in? They must themselves remedy the omission—they must go and "call him"—that he "may eat bread," or take his evening meal with them.

Ver. 21.—Moses was content to dwell with the man. Moses had fled from Egypt without any definite plan, simply to save his life, and had now to determine how he would obtain a subsistence. Received into Reuel's house, or tent, pleased with the man and with his family, he consented to stay with him, probably entered into his service, as Jacob into Laban's (Gen. xxix. 15—20), kept his sheep, or otherwise made himself useful (see ch. iii. 1); and in course of time Reuel gave Moses his daughter, accepted him for his son-in-law, so that he became not merely a member of his household, but of his family, was adopted probably into the tribe, so that he could not quit it without permission (ch. iv. 18), and, so far as his own intention went, cast in his lot with the Midianites, with whom he meant henceforth to live and die. Such vague ideas as he may previously have entertained of his "mission" had passed away; he had been "disillusioned" by his ill-success, and now looked forward to nothing but a life of peaceful obscurity.

Ver. 22.—Gershom. An Egyptian etymology has been assigned to this name ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i., p. 488); but Moses in the text clearly indicates that his own intention was to give his child a name significant in Hebrew. "He called his name Gershom, for he said, a stranger (*ger*) have I been," etc. The only question is, what the second element of the name, *shom*, means. This appears to be correctly explained by Kalisch and others as equivalent to *sham* "there"—so that the entire word would mean "(I was) a stranger there"—i.e. in the country where this son was born to me.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 16—19. — § 1. *Moses a second time the champion of the oppressed.* His championship of an oppressed Hebrew, indiscreetly and wrongfully asserted, had driven Moses from the country of his birth. No sooner does he set foot in the land where he seeks a refuge, than his championship is again called forth. On the first occasion it was a weaker race oppressed by one more powerful that made appeal to his feelings; now it is the weaker sex, oppressed by the stronger, that rouses him. His Egyptian civilisation may have helped to intensify his aversion to this form of oppression, since among the Egyptians of his time women held a high place, and were treated with consideration. He springs forward therefore to maintain the rights of Reuel's daughters; but he has learnt wisdom so far that he restrains himself—kills no one, strikes no one—merely “helps” the victims, and has their wrong redressed. The circumstances of life give continual occasion for such interference as this; and each man is bound, so far as he can, to check oppression, and “see that they who are in need and necessity have right.” If Moses is a warning to us in respect of his mode of action on the former occasion, he is an example here. The protection of women, whensoever and wheresoever they are wronged and ill-used, is a high Christian duty.

Vers. 21, 22.—§ 2. *Moses as husband and father.* The Midianites were descendants of Abraham (Gen. xxv. 2—4); and marriage with them was permitted, even under the Law (Num. xxxi. 18). Moses, in wedding Zipporah, obeyed the primeval command, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. i. 28), while at the same time he gave himself the solace so much needed by an exile, of tender and loving life-long companionship. That Reuel was willing to give him one of his daughters indicates that he had approved himself as a faithful servant in the good priest's household, and was felt to deserve a reward. That Zipporah accepted him was perhaps mere filial obedience, for which she was rewarded when the fugitive and exile became the first man in a considerable nation. God blessed the marriage with male issue, a blessing fondly desired by each true Israelite, and certainly not least by Moses, who knew so well that in some descendant of Abraham “all the families of the earth should be blessed.” A shade of sadness shows itself, however, in the name which he gave his firstborn—Gershom, “a stranger there.” He himself had been for years, and, for aught that he could tell, his son might always be, “a stranger in a strange land”—far from his true home, far from his own people, a refugee among foreigners, who could not be expected to love him as one of themselves, or treat him otherwise than with coldness. Depression like this often assails us at moments of great joy, the good obtained making us feel all the more sensibly that other goods have been lost. Such depression, however, after a time, passes away, and the desponding cry of “Gershom” is followed (ch. xviii. 3, 4) by that of “Eliezer,” or “my God helps.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 15—23.—*The long exile.* Moses took with him into Midian all the best elements of his character; he left some of the faulty ones behind. He may be assumed to have left much of his self-confidence, and to have been cured in part of his natural rashness. His after growth in meekness would almost imply that he had come to see the need of curbing his hot passions, and had, like David, purposed in his heart that he would not transgress (Ps. xvii. 3; xxxii. 1). But he carried with him all his nobleness, all his magnanimity and courtesy. This comes beautifully out in his defence of the women at the well (vers. 16, 17).

I. AN INSTANCE OF CHIVALRY. We have in the incident—1. The weak pushed aside by the strong. Rude, ill-mannered fellows thrust aside the daughters of the priest of Midian from the sheep-troughs, and shamelessly appropriate the water with which they had diligently filled them. 2. Brave championship of the weak. Moses takes their part, stands up to help them, and compels the shepherds to give way. Not content with this, he gives the maidens what assistance he is able. The two disposi-

tions stand in fine contrast: the one all that is unmanly and contemptible, the other all that is chivalrous and noble. The instance teaches—1. That *the chivalrous disposition is also helpful*. The one grace sets off the other. But the bully is a churl, helping nobody, and filching from the weak. 2. That *the bully is to boot a coward*. He will insult a woman, but cringes in the presence of her vindicator. No true man need be afraid to beard him. 3. That *acts of kindness to the defenceless are often repaid in unexpected ways*. They are indeed their own reward. It revives one's spirit to maintain the cause of the needy. Moses, like Jesus, sat by the well; but this little act of kindness, like the Saviour's conversation with the woman of Samaria, did more to refresh his spirit than the sweetest draught he could have taken from it. It was good for him, defeated in resisting tyranny in Egypt, and discouraged by the reception he had met with from his brethren, to have this opportunity of reasserting his crushed manhood, and of feeling that he was still useful. It taught him, and it teaches us—(1) Not to despair of doing good. Tyranny has many phases, and when it cannot be resisted in one form, it may in another. And it taught him (2) Not to despair of human nature. Gratitude had not vanished from the earth, because his brethren had proved ungrateful. Hearts were still to be found, sensitive to the magic touch of kindness; capable of responding to it; ready to repay it by love. For the little deed of chivalry led to unexpected and welcome results. It prepared the way for the hospitable reception of Moses by Reuel; found for him a home in Midian; gave him a wife; provided him with suitable occupation.

II. THE RESIDENCE IN MIDIAN. Notice on this—1. The *place* of it. In or near the Peninsula of Sinai. Solitude and grandeur. Fit place for education of thought and heart. Much alone with God—with Nature in her more awful aspects—with his own thoughts. 2. The *society* of it. He had probably few companions beyond his immediate circle: his wife; her father, sheikh and priest,—pious, hospitable, kindly-natured; the sisters. His life simple and unartificial, a wholesome corrective to the luxury of Egypt. 3. The *occupation* of it. He kept flocks (ch. iii. 1). The shepherd's life, besides giving him a valuable knowledge of the topography of the desert, was very suitable for developing qualities important in a leader—watchfulness, skill, caution, self-reliance, bravery, tenderness, etc. So David was taken "from the sheepcote, from following the sheep," to be ruler over God's people, over Israel (2 Sam. vii. 8). It lets in light on Moses' character that he was willing to stoop to, and did not spurn, this lowly toil. He that could so humble himself was fit to be exalted. By faithfulness in that which was least, he served an apprenticeship for being faithful also in much (Luke xvi. 10). 4. The *duration* of it. Forty years was a long time, but not too long for the training God was giving him. The richest characters are slowest in coming to maturity, and Moses was all this while developing in humility, and in knowledge of God, of man, and of his own heart. The whole subject teaches us valuable lessons. Learn—1. *God's dealings with his servants are often mysterious*. Moses in Midian seems an instance of the highest gifts thrown uselessly away. Is this, we ask in surprise, the only use God can find for a man so richly gifted, so remarkably preserved, and on whom have been lavished all the treasures of Egypt's wisdom? Any ordinary man might be a shepherd, but how few could do the work of a Moses? Moses himself, in the meditations of these forty years, must often have wondered at the strange irony of his life. Yet how clear it was all made to him at last! Trust God to know better what is good for you than you do yourself. 2. *How little a man has, after all, to do with the shaping of his own history!* In one sense he has much, yea everything, to do with it. Had Moses, e.g., not so rashly slain the Egyptian, his whole future would doubtless have borne a different complexion. Man is responsible for his acts, but once he has done them, they are taken in spite of himself out of his hands, and shaped in their consequences by overruling Providence. He who sent the princess to the river, sent also the priest's daughters to the well. 3. *It is man's wisdom to study contentment with his lot*. It may be humble, and not the lot we like, or had counted on. It may be a lot to which we never expected to be reduced. We may feel as if our gifts and powers were being wasted in it. Yet if it is our lot—the one meanwhile providentially marked out for us—our wisdom is cheerfully to accept of it, and make the best of the tasks which belong to it.

J. O.

Ver. 22.—Gershom. 1. *The good man in this world is often lonely at heart.* (1) When violence reigned unchecked. (2) When God's cause is in a depressed condition. (3) When repulsed in efforts to do good. (4) When severed from scenes of former labour. (5) When his outward lot is uncongenial. (6) When deprived of suitable companionships, and when he can find few to sympathise with him. 2. *God sends to the good man alleviations of his loneliness.* We may hope that Zipporah, if not without faults, formed a kind and helpful wife to Moses. Then, sons were born to him—the first, the Gershom of this text. These were consolations. A wife's affection, the prattle and innocence of children—have sweetened the lot of many an exile. Bunyan and his blind daughter.—J. O.

Vers. 15—22.—Moses in Midian. Moses had to flee. The hard, unworthy reproach, humiliating as he must have felt it to be, nevertheless gave him a timely warning. His flight seems to have been instantaneous; perhaps not even the opportunity to bid farewell to his friends. An utter rupture, a complete separation was his only safety. Consider—

I. WHAT HE LEFT BEHIND HIM. 1. *Possibly Pharaoh's daughter was still alive.* If so, we can imagine her sorrow and utter perplexity over the son of her adoption, and the reproaches she might have to bear from her own kindred. How often she may have heard that common expression which adds insult to bitter disappointment, "I told you so." We may be tolerably sure as to one result of the long sojourn of Moses in Midian, viz., that when he returned, she would be vanished from the scene, spared from beholding the son of her adoption the agent of such dreadful visitations to her own people. Yet even with this mitigation, the agony may have been more than she could bear. She had sheltered Moses, watched over him, and "nourished him for her own son," giving him the opportunity to become "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" only to find at last that a sword had pierced through her own soul (Luke ii. 35; Acts vii. 21, 22). 2. *He left his brethren in servitude.* Any expectation they may have had, from his present eminence and possibly greater eminence in the future, was now completely crushed. It is well to effect a timely crushing of false hopes, even if great severity has to be used. 3. *He left behind all difficulties that came from his connexion with the court.* Had he gone on staying in Egypt he would have had to make his election, sooner or later, between the Egyptians and his own people. But now he is spared having to decide for himself. We have to thank God that he sometimes takes painful and difficult decisions out of our hands, so that we have no longer to blame ourselves either for haste or procrastination; for rashness and imprudence, or cowardice and sloth. God in his providence does things for us, which we might find it very hard to do for ourselves.

II. WHAT HE FOUND BEFORE HIM. He went out, hardly knowing whither he went. The safest place was the best for him, and that safest place might not immediately appear. Yet how plain it is that God was guiding him, as really as he guided Abraham, though Moses was not conscious of the guiding. He fled because he had slain a fellow-man, yet he was not going forth as a Cain. Under the wrath of Pharaoh, he was not under that wrath of God which rests upon murderers. He was going to a new school, that was all—having learned all that could be learned in the old one. He probably asked himself as he fled, "Where can I go? Who will receive me? What story can I tell?" He would feel, now the homicide was known, that it was impossible to say how far the news had reached. Onward he sped—perhaps, like most fugitives of the sort, hiding by day and travelling by night—until at last he reached the land of Midian. Here he concluded to dwell, although it may have been in his mind only a temporary stage to a distant and safer abode. And now observe that with this fresh mention of what happened to him after his flight, there is an immediate and still further revelation of his character, all in the way of showing his natural fitness for the great work of his life. He has made an awful mistake in his manner of showing sympathy with Israel, and in consequence has exposed himself to a humiliating rebuff; but all this does not make him one whit less willing to champion the weak when the occasion comes. *He was a man always ready for opportunities of service;* and wherever he went there seemed to be something for

him to do. He had fled from a land where the strong oppressed the weak, and come into another land where he found the same thing prevailing, and in one of its most offensive forms; for the tyranny was that of man over woman. The people of Midian had a priest who seems to have been himself a hospitable man and a judicious and prudent one (ch. xviii.); but there was so little reality of religion among the people, so little respect for the priest's office, that these shepherds drove his daughters away from the well—whom rather they should have gladly helped. It was not an occasional misadventure to the daughters, but a regular experience (ver. 18). None of these shepherds perhaps had ever killed a man, but for all that they were a pack of savage boors. Moses, on the other hand, even though he has slain a man, is not a mere bravo, one who puts little value on human life. One might have said of him as Chaucer says of one of his pilgrims in the 'Canterbury Tales,'

"He was a veray parfit gentil knight."

Then, when Moses had helped the women, his difficulties and doubts were soon brought to an end. He had helped them, though they were utter strangers, because he felt it his duty so to do. He was not looking to them for a release from his difficulties, for how could a few weak women help him, those who had just been the objects of his own pity? But as women had been the means of protecting him in infancy, so they were the means of providing for him now. He did not seek Reuel; Reuel sought him. He needed no certificate of character; these daughters themselves were an epistle of commendation to their father. He might safely tell all his story now, for even the darkest chapter of it would be viewed in the light of his recent generous action.—Y.

Ver. 15.—*Sitting by the well: a suggestive comparison.* The very expression, "He sat down by a well," inevitably suggests that conversation beside the well at Sychar, in which Jesus took so important a part. Note the following points of resemblance, and then say if they can be considered as purely accidental. Are they not rather involved in the profound designs of him who presided over the construction of the Scriptures? 1. As we see Moses fleeing from the face of Pharaoh, so we see Jesus making a prudent departure from Judaea into Galilee, on account of the Pharisees. 2. Both Moses and Jesus are found sitting by a well. 3. As Moses comes in contact with seven women of a *different nation*, so Jesus with the woman of *Samaria*. And just as the daughters of Reuel made the difference seem greater still by calling Moses an Egyptian, which though a name partly appropriate, was yet particularly inappropriate at a time when he was the object of Pharaoh's bitterest hatred—so the woman of Samaria laid emphasis on the fact that Jesus was a Jew, being altogether ignorant how small a part was that of the truth concerning him. 4. The very difference in number is significant. Moses could help a number in the service that he rendered, because it was a mere external service. But Jesus needed to have the woman of Samaria alone, that he might deal effectually with her peculiar, individual need. There is a great difference in respect of the things to be said and done, according as we are dealing with one person or more than one. 5. The meeting of Moses with the daughters of Reuel led on to his becoming acquainted with Reuel himself; gaining his confidence and becoming his helper. So Jesus serving the woman of Samaria was led on to serve, not one only, but many of those connected with her. 6. Moses soon entered into a nearer relation still with Reuel, and Jesus in the course of his conversation with the woman asserted principles which were to break down the barriers between Jew and Samaritan, and every wall of partition separating those who should be united. Lastly, he who helped these women became a shepherd; and his dying thought was of a shepherd's work, as he prayed God to give him a successor who should be a true shepherd to Israel. And as to Jesus, we all know how he delighted to set himself before his disciples as the Good Shepherd, deeply concerned for the nourishment and security of his flock, and concerned most of all to seek and to save that which was lost (Matt. xviii. 11—13; Luke xv. 4; xix. 10).—Y

Ver. 22.—*Life and its moods.* "He called his name Gershom," etc. (Ex. ii. 22), compared with—"And the name of the other was Eliezer," etc. (Ex. xviii. 4),

Note the isolation and misery of the earlier time, and the mercy of the later—each begetting its own tone and mood of mind; and further, the desirability of living above the mood of the passing day. Rev. C. Kingsley says ('Life,' i. 82): "Let us watch against *tones*. They are unsafe things. The tone of a man or woman's mind ought to be that of thoughtful reverence and love; but neither joy or sorrow, or activity or passiveness, or any other animal tone, ought to be habitual," etc.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 23—25.—DEATH OF THE PHARAOH FROM WHOM MOSES FLED—CONTINUANCE OF THE OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL—ISRAEL'S PRAYERS—GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF THEM.—After a space of forty years from the time of Moses' flight from Egypt, according to the estimate of St. Stephen (Acts vii. 30), which is not, however, to be strictly pressed, the king whose anger he had provoked—Rameses II., as we believe—died. He had reigned sixty-seven years—about forty-seven alone, and about twenty in conjunction with his father. At his death, the oppressed Israelites ventured to hope for some amelioration of their condition. On his accession, a king in the East often reverses the policy of his predecessor, or at any rate, to make himself popular, grants a remission of burthens for a certain period. But at this time the new monarch, Menephthah I., the son of Rameses II., disappointed the hopes of the Israelites, maintained his father's policy, continued the established system of oppression, granted them no relief of any kind. They "sighed," therefore, in consequence of their disappointment, and "cried" unto God in their trouble, and made supplication to him more earnestly, more heartily, than ever before. We need not suppose that they had previously fallen away from their faith, and "now at last returned to God after many years of idolatrous aberration" (Aben Ezra, Kalisch). But there was among them an access of religious fervour; they "turned to God" from a state of deadness, rather from one of alienation, and raised a "cry" of the kind to which he is never deaf. God therefore "heard their groaning," deigned to listen to their prayers, and commenced the course of miraculous action which issued in the Exodus.

(This section is more closely connected with what follows than with what went before, and would better begin ch. iii. than terminate ch. ii.)

Ver. 23.—In process of time. Literally, "in those many days." The reign of Rameses II. was exceptionally long, as previously explained. He had already reigned twenty-seven years when Moses fled from him (ch. ii. 15). He had now reigned sixty-seven, and Moses was eighty! It had seemed a weary while to wait. The children of Israel sighed. If the time had seemed a weary while to Moses, how much more to his nation! He had escaped and was in Midian—they toiled on in Egypt. He kept sheep—they had their lives made "bitter" for them "with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field" (ch. i. 14). He could bring up his sons in safety; their sons were still thrown into the river. No wonder that "an exceeding bitter cry" went up to God from the oppressed people, so soon as they found that they had nothing to hope from the new king.

Vers. 24, 25.—God heard their groaning. God is said to "hear" the prayers which he accepts and grants; to "be deaf" to those which he does not grant, but rejects. He now "heard" (i.e. accepted) the supplications of oppressed Israel; and on account of the covenant which he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a covenant always remembered by him—he looked upon his people, made them the objects of his special regard, and entered on a course, which was abnormal, irregular, miraculous, in order to carry out his purposes of mercy towards them. It is observed that anthropomorphic expressions are here accumulated; but this is always the case when the love and tenderness of God towards man are spoken of, since they form the only possible phraseology in which ideas of love and tenderness can be expressed so as to be intelligible to human beings. And God regarded them. Literally, "and God knew." God kept the whole in his thoughts—bore in mind the sufferings, the wrongs, the hopes, the fears, the groans, the despair, the appeal to him, the fervent supplications and prayers—knew all, remembered all—counted every word and sigh—gathered the tears into his bottle—noted all things in his book—and for the present endured, kept silence—but was preparing for his foes a terrible vengeance—for his people a marvellous deliverance.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 23.—*Death comes at last, even to the proudest monarch.* Rameses II. left behind him the reputation of being the greatest of the Egyptian kings. He was confounded with the mythical Sesostris, and regarded as the conqueror of all Western Asia, of Ethiopia, and of a large tract in Europe. His buildings and other great works did, in fact, probably excel those of any other Pharaoh. His reign was the longest, if we except one, of any upon record. He was victorious, by land or sea, over all who resisted his arms. Yet a time came when he too "went the way of all flesh." "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." After eighty years of life and sixty-seven of real power, the Great Rameses was gathered to his fathers. Of what avail then was all his glory, all his wealth, all his magnificence, all his architectural display, all his long series of victories? Could he plead them before the judgment-seat of an all-righteous God? He could not even, according to his own belief, have pleaded them before the tribunal of his own Osiris. A modern writer says that every stone in the edifices which he raised was cemented with the blood of a human victim (Lenormant, 'Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne,' vol. i. p. 423). Thousands of wretches toiled incessantly to add to his glory, and cover Egypt with buildings, obelisks, and colossi, which still show forth his greatness. But what is the result of all, what advantage has he gained by it? On earth, he is certainly not forgotten; but History gibbets him as a tyrant and oppressor—one of the scourges of the human race. In the intermediate region where he dwells, what can be his thoughts of the past? what his expectations of the future? Must he not mourn continually over his misspent life, and unavailingly regret his crimes? The meanest of his victims is now happier than he, and would refuse to change lots with him.

Vers. 24, 25.—*God is never deaf to earnest prayer for deliverance.* It was eighty years since the cruel edict went forth, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river" (ch. i. 22)—ninety, or perhaps a hundred, since the severe oppression began (ib. 11—14). Israel had sighed and groaned during the whole of this long period, and no doubt addressed many a prayer to God, which *seemed* unheard. But no earnest faithful prayer during the whole of the long space was unheard. God treasured them all up in his memory. He was "not slack, as men count slackness." He had to wean his people from their attachment to Egypt—he had to discipline them, to form their character—to prepare them to endure the hardships of the desert, and to face the fierce tribes of Canaan. When this was done—when they were fit—he gave effect to their prayers—"heard their groaning"—and just as they were on the point of despairing, delivered them. The lesson to us here is, that we never despair, never grow weary and listless, never cease our prayers, strive to make them more and more fervent. We can never know how near we are to the time when God will show forth his power—grant and accomplish our prayers.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 23—25.—*The hour of help.* 1. It was *long delayed*. (1) Till tyranny had done its worst. (2) Till the last hope of help from man had disappeared. Improvement may have been looked for at death of king. 2. It *came at last*. (1) When the bondage had served its ends. (2) When the people, in despair of man, were crying to God. 3. When *it did come*—(1) The man was found ready who was to bring it. (2) God was found faithful to his promise.—J. O.

Vers. 1—25.—*Moses and Christ.* Compare in circumstances of early life. 1. Obscurity of birth. 2. Peril in infancy. 3. Protection in Egypt. 4. Rejected by brethren. 5. Humble toil. The carpenter's shop—keeping sheep. 6. Long period of silent preparation. See F. W. Robertson's striking sermon on "The Early Development of Jesus" ('Sermons,' vol. ii.). The period was not so long in Christ's case as in the case of Moses, but had a like significance—preparation for future work.—J. O.

Vers. 23—25.—*A groaning Israel and an observant God.* I. THERE WAS SIGHING AND CRYING, YET NO REAL PRAYER. There was no supplication for help, no expression of confidence in a helper; seeing there was no real sense of trust in One who

could keep, and therefore no possibility of real expectation from him. These Israelites did not wait as they that watch for the morning, sure that it will come at last (Ps. cxxx. 6), but rather as those who say in the morning, "Would God it were even!" and at even, "Would God it were morning!" (Deut. xxviii. 67). Their right attitude, if only they had been able to occupy it, was that which Jesus is said to have occupied (Heb. v. 7). They should have offered up prayers and supplications along with their strong crying and tears to him that was able to save them. But the God who had been so near to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, seemed now removed to a distance. No one appeared with whom the Israelites in their despair could wrestle until they gained the blessing of deliverance. And thus it has been in every generation, and still continues. The misery of the world cannot be silent, and in it all the saddest feature is, that the miserable have no knowledge of God, or, if they have, it is a knowledge without practical use. They are without hope in the world, because they are without God in the world. They go on groaning like a sick infant that neither knows the cause of its trouble nor where to look for help. And in the midst of all this ignorance, Jesus would lead men to true prayer—to intelligent and calm dependence upon God for things according to his will.

II. NOTICE THE REASON GIVEN FOR THE SIGHING AND CRYING. They sighed by reason of the bondage. Bodily restraint, privation, and pain—in these lay the reasons for their groaning. Their pain was that of the senses, not that of the spirit. Little wonder then that they were not susceptible to the presence of God. Contrast their painful experiences with those recorded in the following Psalms, xxxii., xxxviii., xxxix., li., cxix. 136. Jesus made it evident by his dealings with many of those who came to him that the bulk of men, like the Israelites of old, are sighing because of some temporal bondage. They think that pain would vanish, if only they could get all sensible comforts. The poor man thinks what a comfort wealth and plenty must be, yet a rich man came to Jesus, still unsatisfied in spite of his wealth, and was obliged to go away again, sad, because of what Jesus had said, *deeply disturbed and disappointed; and all because he had great possessions*. There was no chance of doing much good to Israel, as long as they were sighing simply because of the bondage. The pain of life which comes through the senses would sink into a matter of superficial insignificance, if only we felt as we ought to do the corruption and danger which come through sin. We should soon come to the true remedy for all our pains, if only we learnt to cry for the clean heart and the right spirit.

III. THOUGH THE SIGHING AND CRYING DID NOT AMOUNT TO A REAL PRAYER, YET GOD ATTENDED TO IT. God made allowance for the ignorance of the people. He knew what was wanted, even though they knew not. The father on earth, being evil, has to make the best guess he can at the interests of his children; our Father in heaven knows exactly what we want. God does not expect from the ignorant what can only be presented by those who know him; and he was about to deal with Israel so that they might know him. And first of all they must be made to feel that Egypt was in reality a very different place from what it appeared to Jacob and his sons, coming out of famine-stricken Canaan. The time had long past when there was any temptation to say, "Surely Egypt is better than Canaan; we shall be able to take our ease, eat, drink, and be merry." There had not only been corn in Egypt, but tyrants and taskmasters. We have all to find out what Egypt really is; and until we make the full discovery, we cannot appreciate the nearness of God and profit by it. God can do much for us when we come to the groaning-point, when the dear illusions of life not only begin to vacate their places, but are succeeded by painful, stern, and abiding realities. When we begin to cry, even though our cry be only because of temporal losses and pains, there is then a chance that we may attend to the increasing revelations of the presence of God, and learn to wait upon him in obedience and prayer.—Y.

Vers. 23—25.—As in streams the water is attracted to and swirls round various centres, so here the interest of the narrative circles about three facts. We have—

I. THE KING'S DEATH. Who the king was may be uncertain. [Some say Aahmes I. —see Canon Cook, in 'Speaker's Commentary;' others, Rameses II.—see R. S. Poole, in 'Contemporary Review,' March, 1879.] What he had done is sufficiently evident. Confronted with an alien people, of whose history he knew little and with whom he had no sympathy, he had treated them with suspicion and cruelty. Walking by

sight he had inaugurated a policy which was sufficiently clever but decidedly unwise; he had hatched the very enmity he dreaded, by making those whom he feared miserable. Nevertheless, he, personally, does not seem to have been the loser in this life. He left a legacy of trouble for his successor, but probably to the last he was feared and honoured. Such lives were to the Egyptians, and must still be, suggestive of immortality. If evil can thus prosper in the person of a king, life must indeed be a moral chaos if it end with death and there be no hereafter. "The king of Egypt died:" what about the King of Heaven and Earth?

II. THE PEOPLE'S CRY. The inheritance of an evil policy accepted and endorsed by the new king. Results upon an oppressed people:—1. *Misery finds a voice.* "They sighed"—a half-stifled cry, which however gathers strength; "they cried." Forty years of silent endurance seeks at length relief in utterance. The king's death brings the dawn of hope; the first feeling after liberty is the cry of anguish which cannot be suppressed. Such a cry, an inarticulate prayer which needed no interpreter to translate it—an honest and heartfelt prayer of which God could take cognizance. 2. *The voice of misery finds a listener.* The cry was a cry with wings to it—it "came up unto God." Too many so-called prayers have no wings, or at most clipped wings. They grovel on the earth like barn-yard fowls, and if they chance to pick up solace, it is, like themselves, of the earth earthy. Winged prayers, even when winged by sorrow, go up, and for a time seem lost, but they reach heaven and find harbour there.

III. GOD'S RESPONSE. 1. *Attention secured and the covenant remembered.* God had not been deaf before, nor had he been forgetful of his promise. For practical memory, however, there must be a practical claim upon that which is remembered. So long as the people are indifferent, their indifference suspends the fulfilment of the covenant. All the while God, by permitting the tyranny, had been stirring up their memory that they might stir up his. When they are aroused, he shows at once that he is mindful. 2. *The children of the covenant beheld, and respect paid to their necessities.* So far, God had looked upon a people of slaves, trying hard to make themselves content with servitude. Now that misery has aroused them to remember who and what they are, he sees once more the children of Israel—offspring of the wrestling Prince. People have to come to themselves before God can effectually look upon them. Content with servitude, he sees them slaves. Mindful of the covenant, he sees them as children. God is ready to help them directly they are ready to claim and to receive help from God.

Application:—Evil in this world often seems to triumph, because men submit to it, and try to make the best of it, instead of resisting it. The general will not fight the foe single-handed; in the interest of those who should be his soldiers, he must have them ready to fight under him. When we realise our true position, then God is ready at once to recognise it. Indifference, forgetfulness, delay, all really due to man. God the deliverer only seems to be that which man the sufferer is.—G.

SECTION II.—CHAPTERS III. IV.

THE CALL AND MISSION OF MOSES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—22.—THE MISSION OF MOSES. After forty years of monotonous pastoral life, affording abundant opportunity for meditation, and for spiritual communion with God, and when he had attained to the great age of eighty years, and the hot blood of youth had given place to the calm serenity of advanced life, God at last revealed Himself to Moses

"called him" (ver. 4), and gave him a definite mission. The present chapter is intimately connected with the next. Together, they contain an account of that extraordinary and indeed miraculous interchange of thought and speech between Moses and God himself, by which the son of Amram was induced to undertake the difficult and dangerous task of freeing his people, delivering them from their bondage in Egypt, and conducting them

through the wilderness to that "land flowing with milk and honey," which had been promised to the seed of Abraham more than six centuries previously (Gen. xv. 18). Whatever hopes he had entertained of being his people's deliverer in youth and middle life, they had long been abandoned; and, humanly speaking, nothing was more improbable than that the aged shepherd, grown "slow of speech and of a slow tongue" (ch. iv. 10)—his manners rusticated—his practical faculties rusted by disuse—his physical powers weakened—should come forth from a retirement of forty years' duration to be a leader and king of men. Nothing less than *direct* supernatural interposition could—one may well believe—have sufficed to overcome the natural *vis inertiae* of Moses' present character and position. Hence, after an absolute cessation of miracle for more than four hundred years, miracle is once more made use of by the Ruler of the Universe to work out his ends. *A dignus vindice nodus* has arisen; and the ordinary laws of that Nature which is but one of his instruments are suspended by the Lord of All, who sees what mode of action the occasion requires, and acts accordingly.

Ver. 1.—**Moses kept the flock.** The Hebrew expresses that this was his regular occupation. Understand by "flock" either sheep or goats, or the two intermixed. Both anciently and at the present day the Sinaitic pastures support these animals, and not horned cattle. Of Jethro, his father-in-law. The word translated "father-in-law" is of much wider application, being used of almost any relation by marriage. Zipporah uses it of Moses in ch. iv. 25, 26; in Gen. xix. 12, 14, it is applied to Lot's "sons-in-law;" in other places it is used of "brothers-in-law." Its application to Jethro does not prove him to be the same person as Reuel, which the difference of name renders improbable. He was no doubt the head of the tribe at this period, having succeeded to that dignity, and to the priesthood, when Reuel died. He may have been either Reuel's son or his nephew. The backside of the desert, i.e. "behind" or "beyond the desert," across the strip of sandy plain which separates the coast of the Eleanitic Gulf from the mountains, to the grassy regions beyond. He came to the mountain of God, even Horeb. Rather, "the mountain of God, Horeb-way," or "towards Horeb." By "the mountain of God" Sinai seems to be meant. It may be so named either by anticipation (as "the land of Ramesses" in Gen. xlvii. 11), or because there was already a sanctuary there to

the true God, whom Reuel and Jethro worshipped (ch. xviii. 12).

Ver. 2.—**The angel of the Lord.** Literally, "an angel of Jehovah." Taking the whole narrative altogether, we are justified in concluding that the appearance was that of "the Angel of the Covenant" or "the Second Person of the Trinity himself;" but this is not stated nor implied in the present verse. We learn it from what follows. The angel "appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of the thorn-bush"—not out of "a thorn-bush"—which may be explained by there being only one on the spot, which however seems improbable, as it is a common tree; or by Moses having so often spoken of it, that, when he came to write to his countrymen, he naturally called it "the bush," meaning "the bush of which you have all heard." So St. John says of the Baptist (iii. 24) that "he was not yet cast into the prison," meaning, the prison into which you all know that he was cast. *Seneh*, the word translated "bush," is still the name of a thorny shrub, a species of acacia, common in the Sinaitic district.

Ver. 3.—**I will turn aside.** Suspecting nothing but a natural phenomenon, which he was anxious to investigate. The action bespeaks him a man of sense and intelligence, not easily scared or imposed upon.

Ver. 4.—**When the Lord saw . . . God called.** This collocation of words is fatal to the entire Elohist and Jehovistic theory, for no one can suppose that two different writers wrote the two clauses of the sentence. Nor, if the same term was originally used in both clauses, would any reviser have altered one without altering both. Out of the midst of the bush. A voice, which was the true voice of God, appeared to Moses to proceed out of the midst of the fire which enveloped the thorn-bush. An objective reality is described, not a vision. Moses, Moses. The double call implies urgency. Compare the call of Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 10).

Ver. 5.—**Draw not nigh.** The awful greatness of the Creator is such that his creatures, until invited to draw near, are bound to stand aloof. Moses, not yet aware that God himself spoke to him, was approaching the bush too close, to examine and see what the "great thing" was. (See ver. 3.) On the general unfitness of man to approach near to holy things, see the comment on ch. xix. 12. Put off thy shoes. Rather, "thy sandals." Shoes were not worn commonly, even by the Egyptians, until a late period, and would certainly not be known in the land of Midian at this time. The practice of putting them off before entering a temple, a palace, or even the private apartments of a house, was, and is, universal in the East—the rationale of it being that the shoes or sandals have dust or dirt attaching to them. The command given to

Moses at this time was repeated to Joshua (Josh. v. 15). Holy ground. Literally, "ground of holiness"—ground rendered holy by the presence of God upon it—not "an old sanctuary," as some have thought, for then Moses would not have needed the information.

Ver. 6.—The God of thy father. "Father" here is used collectively, meaning forefathers generally, a usage well known to Hebraists (Compare ch. xv. 2, and ch. xviii. 4.) The God of Abraham, etc., i.e. the God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and entered into covenant with them (Gen. xv. 1—21; xxvi. 2—5; xxxv. 1—12). The conclusion which our Blessed Lord drew from this verse (Matt. xxii. 32) is not directly involved in it, but depends on his minor premiss, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Moses hid his face. A natural instinctive action. So Elijah, on the same site (1 K. xix. 13) and the holy angels before God's throne in heaven (Is. vi. 2). In the religious system of Rome, the augurs when discharging their office, and all persons when offering a sacrifice, veiled their heads. (See Liv. i. 18; Virg. *Æn.* iii. 405; Juv. vi. 390.)

Ver. 7.—I have surely seen. Literally "Seeing I have seen"—an expression implying continuance. On the force of the anthropomorphic terms "seeing, hearing, knowing," as used of God, see the comment on ch. ii. 24—25. Taskmasters. Not the general superintendents of ch. i. 11, but subordinate officials, who stood over the labourers and applied the rod to their backs. (See above, ch. ii. 11.)

Ver. 8.—I am come down. Another anthropomorphism, and one very common in Scripture (Gen. xi. 5, 7; xvii. 21; Ps. xviii. 9; cxliv. 5, etc.), connected of course with the idea that God has a special dwellingplace, which is above the earth. To bring them up. Literally correct. Palestine is at a much higher level than Egypt. (Compare Gen. xii. 10; xiii. 1; xxxvii. 25; xxxix. 1; xlii. 2; xlvii. 3, 4; i. 25.) A good land and a large. The fertility of Palestine, though not equal to that of Egypt, was still very great. Eastward of Jordan, the soil is rich and productive, the country in places wooded with fine trees, and the herbage luxuriant. Vast tracts in the spring produce enormous crops of grain, and throughout the year pasturage of every kind is abundant. "Still the countless flocks and herds may be seen, droves of cattle moving on like troops of soldiers, descending at sunset to drink of the springs—literally, in the language of the prophet, "rams, and lambs, and goats, and bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan" (Stanley, 'Jewish Church,' pp. 217, 218). The western region is less productive, but by careful cultivation in terraces may be made to bear excellent crops of corn, olives, and figs. Palestine proper to a modern European seems small, being about the size of Belgium, less

than Holland or Hanover, and not much larger than Wales. It contains about 11,000 square miles. To an Israelite of the age of Moses such a land would appear sufficiently "large;" for it was considerably larger than the entire Delta of Egypt, whereof his nation occupied the smaller half; and it fell but little short of the entire cultivable area of the whole land of Egypt, which was the greatest and most powerful country known to him. It may be added that the land included in the covenant which God made with Abraham (Gen. xv. 18—21), and actually possessed by David and Solomon (1 K. iv. 21), was a "good land and a large," according even to modern notions, including (as it did) besides Palestine the whole of Syria, and thus containing an area of from 50,000 to 60,000 square miles. The phrase flowing with milk and honey, first used here, and so common in the later books (Num. xiii. 27; Deut. xxvi. 9, 15; xxxi. 20; Jer. xi. 5; xxxii. 22; Ezek. xx. 6, etc.) was probably a proverbial expression for "a land of plenty," and not intended literally. See what the spies say, Num. xiii. 27.

The enumeration of the nations of Palestine here made is incomplete, five only of the ten whose land was promised to Abraham (Gen. xv. 19—21) being expressly mentioned. One, however, that of the Hivites, is added. We may suppose that they had succeeded to the Kenizzites or the Kadmonites of Abraham's time. The only important omission is that of the Girgashites, who hold their place in most other enumerations (Gen. x. 16; xv. 21; Deut. vii. 1; Josh. iii. 10; xxiv. 11, etc.), but seem to have been the least important of the "seven nations," and are omitted in Judg. iii. 5. ("Girgashites" is introduced in the Samaritan version and the Sept.)

Ver. 9.—This is a repetition, in substance, of ver. 7, on account of the long parenthesis in ver. 8, and serves to introduce verse 10. The *nexus* is: "I have seen the oppression—I am come down to deliver them—come now, therefore, I will send thee."

Ver. 11.—And Moses said . . . Who am I, that I should go, etc. A great change had come over Moses. Forty years earlier he had been forward to offer himself as a "deliverer." He "went out" to his brethren and slew one of their oppressors, and "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts vii. 25). "But they understood not" (*ibid.*) They declined to accept him for leader, they reproached him with setting himself up to be "a ruler and a judge" over them. And now, taught by this lesson, and sobered by forty years of inaction, he has become timid and distrustful of himself, and shrinks from putting himself forward. Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh? What weight can I, a foreigner, forty years an exile, with the manners

of a rough shepherd, expect to have with the mighty monarch of all Egypt—the son of **Rameses the Great**, the inheritor of his power and his glories? And again, **Who am I**, that I should bring forth the children of Israel? What weight can I expect to have with my countrymen, who will have forgotten me—whom, moreover, I could not influence when I was in my full vigour—who then “refused” my guidance and forced me to quit them? True diffidence speaks in the words used—there is no ring of insincerity in them; Moses was now as distrustful of himself as in former days he had been confident, and when he had become fit to be a deliverer, ceased to think himself fit.

Ver. 12.—**Certainly I will be with thee.** Literally, “*Since* I will be with thee.” Moses had excused himself on the ground of unfitness. God replies—“Thou wilt not be unfit, *since* I will be with thee—I will supply thy deficiencies—I will impart all the qualities thou needest—and this shall be a sign unto thee of my power and faithfulness—this shall assure thee that I am not sending thee upon a fruitless errand—it is determined in my counsels that not only shalt thou succeed, and lead the people out, but after that—when thou hast so done—thou and they together shall serve me on this mountain.” The “sign” was one which appealed to faith only, like that given to Hezekiah by Isaiah (1 K. xix. 29), but, if accepted, it gave a full assurance—the second step involved the first—the end implied the means—if Moses was of a certainty to bring the Israelites to Sinai, he must first lead them out of Egypt—he must in some way or other triumph over all the difficulties which would beset the undertaking.

Ver. 13.—**What is his name?** It is not at all clear why Moses should suppose that the Israelites would ask him this question, nor does it even appear that they did ask it. Perhaps, however, he thought that, as the Egyptians used the word “god,” generically, and had a special name for each particular god—as Ammon, Phthah, Ra, Mentu, Hor, Osiris, and the like—when he told his people of “the God of their fathers,” they would conclude that he, too, had a proper name, and would wish to know it. The Egyptians set much store by the names of their gods, which in every case had a meaning. Ammon was “the concealed (god),” Phthah, “the revealer,” Ra, “the swift,” etc. Hitherto Israel’s God had had no name that could be called a proper name more than any other. He had been known as “El,” “The High,” “Shaddai,” “The Strong,” and “Jehovah,” “The Existent;” but these terms had all been felt to be descriptive epithets, and none of them had passed as yet into a proper name. What was done at this time, by the authority of God himself, was to select from among the epithets one to be distinctly a proper name, and at the

same time to explain its true meaning as something more than “The Existent”—as really “The Alone Existent”—the source of all existence. Henceforth this name, which had previously been but little used and perhaps less understood, predominated over every other, was cherished by the Jews themselves as a sacred treasure, and recognised by those around them as the proper appellation of the one and only God whom the Israelites worshipped. It is found in this sense on the Moabite stone (‘Records of the Past,’ vol. xi., p. 166), in the fragments of Philo-Byblius, and elsewhere.

Ver. 14.—**I AM THAT I AM.** No better translation can be given of the Hebrew words. “*I will be that I will be*” (Geddes) is more literal, but less idiomatic, since the Hebrew was the simplest possible form of the verb substantive. “*I am because I am*” (Boothroyd) is wrong, since the word *asher* is certainly the relative. The Septuagint, *Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν*, explains rather than translates, but is otherwise unobjectionable. The Vulgate, *sum qui sum*, has absolute exactness. The idea expressed by the name is, as already explained, that of real, perfect, unconditioned, independent existence. **I AM** hath sent me to you. “*I am*” is an abbreviated form of “*I am that I am*,” and is intended to express the same idea.

Ver. 15.—**The Lord God.** In the original *Jehovah elohay*—“Jehovah, God of your fathers,” etc. The name is clearly an equivalent of the “*I am*” in the preceding verse. The exact mode of its formation from the old root *hava*, “to be,” is still disputed among the best Hebraists. This is my name for ever. Henceforth there will be no change—this will be my most appropriate name so long as the world endures—“The Existent”—“The Alone Existent”—“He that is, and was, and is to come” (Rev. i. 4, 8; iv. 8; xi. 17; xvi. 5). **My memorial.** The name whereby I am to be spoken of.

Ver. 16.—**Gather the elders.** It is generally thought that we are to understand by “the elders” not so much the more aged men, as those who bore a certain official rank and position among their brethren, the heads of the various houses (ch. vi. 14, 25; xi. 21), who exercised a certain authority even during the worst times of the oppression. Moses was first to prevail on them to acknowledge his mission, and was then to go with them to Pharaoh and make his representation (ver. 18). **I have surely visited you.** The words are a repetition of those used by Joseph on his deathbed (Gen. 1. 24), and may be taken to mean, “*I have done as Joseph prophesied—I have made his words good thus far. Expect, therefore, the completion of what he promised.*”

Ver. 18.—**They shall hearken to thy voice.** Moses thought they would despise him—turn a deaf ear to his words—look upon him as

unworthy of credit. But it was not so. The hearts of men are in God's hands, and he disposed those of the elders to receive the message of his servant, Moses, favourably, and believe in it. (See ch. iv. 29—31.) Thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt. This future is perhaps one of command rather than of prophetic announcement. The elders do not seem to have actually made their appearance before Pharaoh. (See ch. v. 1—4.) They may, however, have authorised Moses and Aaron to speak in their name. The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us. Through our representative Moses. "Met with us" is undoubtedly the true meaning. That we may sacrifice. There was reticence here, no doubt, but no falseness. It was a part of God's design that sacrifice, interrupted during the sojourn in Egypt for various reasons, should be resumed beyond the bounds of Egypt by His people. So much of his purpose, and no more, he bade Moses lay before Pharaoh on the first occasion. The object of the reticence was not to deceive Pharaoh, but to test him.

Ver. 19.—I am sure. Literally, "I know," a better rendering, since, "I am sure" implies something less than knowledge. No, not by a mighty hand. Or "not even by a mighty hand." Pharaoh will not be willing to let you go even when my mighty hand is laid upon him. (See ch. viii. 15, 19, 32; ix. 12, 35; x. 20, 27.) "But by strong hand" (*marg.*) is a rendering which the rules of grammar do not permit.

Ver. 20.—I will stretch out my hand. To encourage Moses and the people, to support them in what was, humanly speaking, a most unequal contest, this important promise is made. It is a confirmation, and to some extent, an explanation of the pledge already given, "Certainly I will be with thee" (ver. 12). It shows *how* God would be with him—he would smite Egypt with all his wonders—what those would be was left obscure. He would come to his people's aid, and openly assert himself, and afflict and strike terror into their enemies—until at last even Pharaoh's stubborn spirit would be broken, and he would consent to let them go.

Vers. 21, 22.—The "spoiling of the Egyptians" has called forth much bitter comment. (See Kalisch, note on Ex. iii. 22.) It has been termed a combination of "fraud, deception and theft"—"base deceit and nefarious

fraud"—"glaring villainy," and the like. The unfortunate translation of a verb meaning "ask" by "borrow" in ver. 22, has greatly helped the objectors. In reality, what God here commanded and declared was this:—The Israelite women were told on the eve of their departure from Egypt to ask presents (*bakh-sheesh*) from their rich Egyptian neighbours, as a contribution to the necessary expenses of the long journey on which they were entering; and God promised that he would so favourably incline the hearts of these neighbours towards them, that, in reply to their request, articles of silver and of gold, together with raiment, would be freely and bounteously bestowed on them—so freely and so bounteously, that they might clothe and adorn, not only themselves, but their sons and daughters, with the presents; and the entire result would be that, instead of quitting Egypt like a nation of slaves, in rags and penniless, they would go forth in the guise of an army of conquerors, laden with the good things of the country, having (with their own good-will) "spoiled the Egyptians." No fraud, no deceit, was to be practised—the Egyptians perfectly well understood that, if the Israelites once went, they would never voluntarily return—they were asked to give and they gave—with the result that Egypt was "spoiled." Divine justice sees in this a rightful nemesis. Oppressed, wronged, down-trodden, miserably paid for their hard labour during centuries, the Israelites were to obtain at the last something like a compensation for their ill-usage; the riches of Africa were to be showered on them. Egypt, "glad at their departing," was to build them a bridge of gold to expedite their flight, and to despoil herself in order to enrich her quondam slaves, of whom she was, under the circumstances, delighted to be rid.

Ver. 22.—Borrow. The Hebrew word means simply "ask" (*air-jaei*, LXX.; *postulabit*, Vulg.). Of her neighbours. The intermixture to some extent of the Egyptians with the Hebrews in Goshen is here again implied, as in chs. i. and ii. And of her that sojourneth in her house. Some of the Israelites, it would seem, took in Egyptian lodgers superior to them in wealth and rank. This implies more friendly feeling between the two nations than we should have expected; but it is quite natural that, after their long stay in Egypt, the Hebrews should have made a certain number of the Egyptians their friends.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The Burning Bush*.—All nations have seen in fire something emblematic of the Divine nature. The Vedic Indians made Agni (fire) an actual god, and sang hymns to him with more fervour than to almost any other deity. The Persians maintained perpetual fires on their fire-altars, and supposed them to have a divine character. Hephaistos in the Greek and Vulcan in the Roman mythology were

fire-gods; and Baal, Chemosh, Moloch, Tabiti, Orotal, etc., represented more or less the same idea. Fire is in itself pure and purifying; in its effects mighty and terrible, or life-giving and comforting. Viewed as light—its ordinary though not universal concomitant—it is bright, glorious, dazzling, illuminative, soul-cheering. God under the Old Covenant revealed himself in fire, not only upon this occasion, but at Sinai (ch. xix. 18; xxiv. 17), to Manoah (Judg. xiii. 20), to Solomon (2 Chr. vii. 1—3), to Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 4—28), to Daniel (Dan. vii. 9, 10); under the New Covenant, he is declared to be “a consuming fire” (Heb. xii. 29), “the Light of the world” (John viii. 12), “the True Light” (*ib.* i. 9), “the Sun of Righteousness.” Of all material things nothing is so suitable to represent God as this wonderful creation of his, so bright, so pure, so terrible, so comforting! To Moses God reveals himself not merely in fire, but in a “burning bush.” In this respect the revelation is abnormal—nay, unique, without a parallel. Surely this was done, not merely to rouse his curiosity, but to teach him some lesson or other. It is well to consider what lesson or lessons may have been intended by it. First, Moses would see that “the ways of God were not as man’s ways;” that, instead of coming with as much, he came with as little, display as possible; instead of showing all his glory and lighting up all Sinai with unendurable radiance, he condescended to appear in a small circumscribed flame, and to rest upon so mean, so poor, so despised an object as a thorn-bush. God “chooseth the weak things of the world to confound the strong;” anything is sufficient for his purpose. He creates worlds with a word, destroys kingdoms with a breath, cures diseases with clay and spittle or the hem of a garment, revolutionises the earth by a group of fishermen. Secondly, he would see the spirituality of God. Even when showing himself in the form of fire, he was not fire. Material fire would have burnt up the bush, have withered its fair boughs and blasted its green leaves in a moment of time; this fire did not scathe a single twig, did not injure even the most delicate just-opening bud. Thirdly, he might be led on to recognise God’s tenderness. God’s mercy is “over all his works,” he will not hurt one of them unnecessarily, or without an object. He “careth for cattle” (Jonah iv. 11), clothes the lilies with glory (Matt. vi. 28—30), will not let a sparrow fall to the ground needlessly (*ib.* x. 29). Lastly, he might learn that the presence of God is “consuming” only of what is evil. Of all else it is preservative. God was present with his people in Egypt, and his presence preserved them in that furnace of affliction. God was present in each devout and humble heart of his true followers, and his presence kept them from the fiery darts of the Wicked One. God would be present through all time with his Church and with his individual worshippers, not as a destroying, but as a sustaining, preserving, glorifying influence. His spiritual fire would rest upon them, envelop them, encircle them, yet would neither injure nor absorb their life, but support it, maintain it, strengthen it.

Ver. 3.—*The impulse to draw nigh.* Moses saw a strange sight; one that he had never seen before; one that struck him with astonishment. His natural impulse was to inquire into its cause. God has implanted in us all this instinct, and we should do ill if we were to combat it. Natural phenomena are within reason’s sphere; and Moses, who had never yet seen a supernatural sight, could not but suppose, at first beholding it, that the burning bush was a natural phenomenon. That he approached to examine is an indication that he was a man of spirit and intelligence; not a coward who might have feared some snare, not careless and unobservant, as too many country folk are. He drew near to see more clearly, and to use his other senses in discovering what the “great thing” was—acting like a sensible man and one who had had a good education.

Vers* 4—6.—*The prohibition, and the ground of it.* Suddenly the steps of the inquirer are arrested. Wonder upon wonder! a voice calls to him out of the bush, and calls him by his own name, “Moses, Moses!” Now must have dawned on him the conviction that it was indeed a “great thing” which he was witnessing; that the ordinary course of nature was broken in upon; that he was about to be the recipient of one of those wonderful communications which God from time to time had vouchsafed to his forefathers, as to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and

Israel. Hence his submissive, child-like answer, "Here I am." (Compare 1 Sam. iii. 4, 6.) Then came the solemn prohibition, "Draw not nigh hither." Man, until sanctified, until brought into covenant, must not approach near to the dread presence of the Supreme Being. At Sinai Moses was commanded to "set bounds" to keep the people off, that no one might "go up into the mount, nor touch the border of it" (ch. xix. 12). The men of Bethshemesh were smitten with death, to the number of 50,070, for looking into the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. vi. 19). Uzzah was slain for putting forth his hand to touch it, when he thought that there was danger of its falling (2 Sam. vi. 7). God, under the Old Covenant, impressed on man in a multitude of ways his unapproachableness. Hence all the arrangements of the Temple; the veil guarding the sanctuary, into which only the high-priest could enter once in the year; the main temple-building, only to be entered by the priests; the courts of the Levites, of the Israelites, and of the Gentiles, each more and more remote from the Divine Presence. Hence the purifications of the priests and of the Levites before they could acceptably offer sacrifice; hence the carrying of the Ark by means of staves forming no part of it; hence the side-chambers of the Temple, emplaced on "rests" in the walls, "that the beams should not be fastened in the walls of the house" (1 Kings vi. 6). It was so needful to impress on men, apt to conceive of God as "such an one as themselves," his awful majesty, purity, and holiness, that artificial barriers were everywhere created to check man's rash intrusion into a Presence for which he was unfit. Thus reverence was taught, man was made to know and to feel his own unworthiness, and, little by little, came to have some faint conception of the absolute perfectness and incomprehensible greatness of the Supreme One. Further, God being such as this, each place where he makes himself manifest, becomes at once *holy ground*. Though "heaven is his throne, and earth his footstool," and no "place" seems worthy of him or can contain him, yet it pleases him, in condescension to our infirmities and our finiteness, to choose some spots rather than others where he will make himself known and make his presence felt. And these at once are sacred. So was the mount to which Moses went up; so was Shiloh; so was Araunah's threshing-floor; so was Jerusalem. And so in our own days are churches and the precincts of churches. God's presence, manifested in them, albeit spiritually and not materially, hallows them. And the reverent heart feels this, and cannot but show its reverence by outward signs. In the East shoes were put off. With us the head should be uncovered, the voice hushed, the eye cast down. We should feel that "God is in the midst of us." So felt Moses, when God had proclaimed himself (ver. 6), and not only bared his feet as commanded, but shrouded his face in his robe—"for he was afraid to look upon God." All his own sinfulness and imperfection rushed to his thought, all his unworthiness to behold God and live. Jacob had once seen God "face to face," and had marvelled that "his life was preserved" (Gen. xxxii. 30). Moses shut out the awful Vision. So Elijah, on the same site, when he heard the "still small voice" (1 Kings xix. 13); and so even the seraphim who wait continually before God's Throne in heaven (Is. vi. 2). Consciousness of imperfection forces the creature to stand abashed in the presence of the Creator.

Vers. 7-10.—*The call of Moses.* With face covered, but with ears attent to hear, Moses stands before God to learn his will. And God takes him, as it were, into counsel, not only calling him to a certain work, but revealing to him why he is called, what exactly he is to do, and what will be the issue of his enterprise. 1. WHY HE IS CALLED. He is called because the affliction of Israel—their sufferings—from the constant toil, from the brutal taskmasters, from the cruel Pharaoh, from the apparent hopelessness of their position—had reached to such a point that God could allow it to go on no longer. There is a point at which he will interfere to vindicate the oppressed and punish the wrong-doers, even if the oppressed are too much crushed, too downtrodden, too absolutely in despair, to cry to him. Their *case* calls to him; their "blood cries from the ground." But in this instance actual despair had not been reached. His people had "cried to him." And here was a second reason why he should interfere. God is never deaf to any prayers addressed to him for succour; he may not always grant them, but he hears them. And if they are sustained, and earnest, and justified by the occasion, he grants them. Such was the case now, and Moses was called because of

the *extreme* affliction of the Israelites, and because of their prolonged and earnest cry to God under it. 2. Moses is told WHAT HE IS TO DO. He is to "bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt" (ver. 10); and, as a preliminary step, he is to "go to Pharaoh" (*ibid.*). Thus he is directed to return to Egypt forthwith, and to put himself into communication with the new king who had succeeded the one from whom he had fled. So much is made clear to him. He, an exile for forty years, and a mere hireling shepherd of the desert during that space, is to seek an interview with the great monarch of all Egypt, and to plead the cause of his people before him—to endeavour to induce him to "let them go." A difficult enterprise, to say the least; humanly speaking, a hopeless one. How should a king be induced to allow the departure of 600,000 able-bodied labourers, whose condition was that of state slaves, who could be set to any work which the king had in hand—to keep cattle, or make bricks, or build cities, or erect walls, or excavate canals? What inducement was to be offered to him to make the sacrifice? Such thoughts would naturally occur to Moses under the circumstances, and would naturally have risen to his lips but for the distinct announcement made with regard to the further point. 3. WHAT WOULD BE THE ISSUE OF THE ENTERPRISE. The Divine declaration, "I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large," was so definite and clear a statement, so positive a promise of success, as to override all objections on the score of the task being an impossible one. God "had come down to deliver" his people, and would undoubtedly do it, whatever opposition was raised. Thus, to counteract the despondency which the consideration of the existing facts and circumstances was calculated to produce, there was held forth before Moses the positive assurance of success; the certainty that God would make good his word; would, however difficult it seemed, lead his people forth, deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptian, and make them the masters of another land, large and good, flowing with milk and honey, into possession of which they would enter through his might and by his irresistible assistance.

Ver. 11.—*Fitness of Moses to be God's instrument in delivering Israel.* The fitness of Moses to be Israel's deliverer will appear if we consider, first, What were the qualities which the part of deliverer required; secondly, how far they were united in him; and thirdly, what reasons there are for believing that, at the time, they were not united to the same extent in any other person. 1. NECESSARY QUALITIES OF THE DELIVERER. As having to deal, in the first instance, with a great king and his court, it was necessary that the Deliverer should be familiar with the habits of the court, should be able to assume its manners, speak its language, and not unwittingly infringe its etiquette. Not being set merely to petition, but to require—to prefer demands—it was requisite that he should feel himself, socially, on a par with the monarch, so as not to be timid or abashed before him, but able without difficulty to assert himself, to use freedom of speech, to talk as prince with prince, and not as mere courtier with monarch. Again, as having to meet and baffle Egyptian priests, and further, to be not only the Deliverer, but the Teacher and Educator of his nation, it was to the last degree necessary that he should be "learned in all the wisdom" of the time; that he should have had as good an education as any other man of the day; be able to foil the priests with their own weapons; and, after delivering his people out of bondage, be capable of elevating them, instructing them, advancing them from a rabble of slaves into an orderly, self-sufficient, fairly-enlightened, if not highly-civilised, nation. Once more: a moral fitness was necessary. The Deliverer needed to have high aspirations, a bold spirit, fervent zeal, and yet to have all these under control; to be calm, quiet, self-contained, imperturbable in danger, persevering, prompt, considerate. Moreover, he needed to be a religious man. Anyone not upheld by high religious principle, anyone not possessed of deep and true faith, would have fallen away in some of the trials through which the nation had to pass; would have despaired, or murmured, or "lusted after evil things" (1 Cor. x. 6), or waxed proud and wanton, or grown weary of seemingly interminable wanderings, and settled down in Arabia or even returned to Egypt. 2. MOSES' POSSESSION OF THESE QUALITIES. Moses was familiar with the customs of the Egyptian court, having been brought up in the household of a princess, and been himself a courtier until he was nearly forty years of age. Though he had subsequently spent forty years in the

desert, this would not unfit him; since, in the first place, Egyptian manners and customs were unchanging; and secondly, life in the desert is at no time a bad school of manners. Arabian shepherds are not like European ones. As much politeness is often seen in the tent of a Bedouin as in the drawingroom of an empress. Moses probably *thought* that his forty years of seclusion rendered him less suited for the atmosphere of a court, but he was probably mistaken. What he may have lost in polish he gained in simplicity, directness, and general force of character. Moses, again, could speak with the Pharaoh almost as an equal, since as the adopted son of a princess he had been accounted a prince, and may even, before his flight, have met Menephtah in the royal palace on terms of social equality. On the education and "wisdom" of Moses we have already descanted, and it will scarcely be questioned that in these respects he was eminently fitted for the part assigned to him by Providence. His character, too, as chastened and ripened in Midian, made him exceptionally fit. Audacity, high aspirations, strong sympathies, a burning zeal, had shown themselves in the conduct that led to his exile. These had been disciplined and brought under control by the influences of desert life, which had made him calm, self-contained, patient, persevering, considerate, without quenching his zeal or taming his high spirit. And of his religious principle there is no question. If he angered God once by "speaking unadvisedly" (Ps. cvi. 33; Num. xx. 10), this does but show that he was human, and therefore not perfect. Apart from this one occasion his conduct as leader of the people is, as nearly as possible, blameless. And his piety is everywhere conspicuous. 3. NO ONE BUT MOSES POSSESSED THE NECESSARY QUALITIES. With the limited knowledge that we possess, the negative is incapable of positive proof. But, so far as our historical knowledge goes, there is no one who can be named as possessing any one of the necessary qualities in a higher degree than Moses, much less as uniting them all. No Hebrew but Moses had had, so far as we know, the advantages of education and position enjoyed by Moses. No Egyptian would have been trusted by the Hebrew nation and accepted as their leader. No one who was neither Egyptian nor Hebrew would have had any weight with either people. Thus Moses was the one and only possible deliverer, exactly fitted by Providence for the position which it was intended he should take: raised up, saved, educated, trained by God to be his instrument in delivering his people, and so exactly fitted for the purpose.

Vers. 11—12.—*Moses' timidity notwithstanding his fitness.* It is not often that those are most confident of their powers who are fittest for God's work. Great capacity is constantly accompanied by a humble estimate of itself. Jeremiah's reply when God called him was: "Ah! Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jer. i. 6). Newton seemed to himself a child gathering shells upon the shores of the ocean of Truth. The exclamation of Moses, "Who am I that I should go," etc. has been echoed by thousands. If, however, God's call is clear, the voice of self-depreciation is not to be much listened to. He knows best whether we are fit to work out his purposes, or no. Whether the call is to be an ordinary minister, or a missionary, or a bishop, or a civil leader, the foremost in a political movement, or a general at the crisis of a war, or anything else, too much timidity ought not to be shown. There is cowardice in shrinking from responsibility. If the call be clearly from without, not courted by ourselves, not sought, not angled for, not assignable to any unworthy motive, then it is to be viewed as God's call; and the proper answer is "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Unfit as we may think ourselves, we may be sure that he will not leave us to ourselves—his grace will be sufficient for us—he will give us all the strength we need.

Vers. 13—15.—*God's revelation of himself under the name Jehovah, and the meaning of it.* At first sight the name by which God shall be called may seem unimportant, as it is unimportant whether a man be called Tully or Cicero. But, originally, each name that is given to God is significant; and according as one name or another is commonly used, one idea or another of the Divine nature will be prevalent. Hitherto God had been known mainly to the Semites as *El*, *Eliun*, *Elohim*, "Exalted, Lofty," or *Shaddai*, "Strong, Powerful." Another name known to them, but rarely used, was *JHVH*, "Existent." (The vocalisation of the name has been lost, and is uncertain.) God was

now asked by Moses under what name he should speak of him to the Israelites, and was bidden to speak of him as JHVH. What, then, was the full meaning of JHVH, and why was it preferred to the other names? Probably as a security against polytheism. When words expressive of such attributes as exaltation, strength, knowledge, goodness, beautifulness, even creative energy, are made into names of God, there is a temptation at once to extend them from the one to the many, from the possessor of the attribute in the highest degree to others who possess it, or are supposed to possess it, in a high degree. Thus all such words come to be used in the plural, and the way is paved for polytheism. But if God is called "the Existent," this danger disappears; for there are but two kinds or degrees of existence, viz., self-existence, and created, dependent existence. "The Existent" must mean "the Self-Existent," who must necessarily be One. Hence JHVH never had a plural. The only way by which an Israelite could become a polytheist was by deserting Jehovah altogether and turning to *Elohim*. In vindicating to himself the name Jehovah, "He who exists," or "He who alone exists," God declared himself to be—1, eternal; 2, uncaused; 3, unconditioned; 4, independent; 5, self-sufficient. He placed a gulf, profound—not to be bridged—between himself and every other being. He indicated that all other gods were unrealities—breath, vapour, shadows of shades; that he alone was real, stable, to be trusted; and that in him his worshippers might have "quietness and assurance for ever."

Ver. 16.—*The Divine injunction to gather the elders.* God here added another injunction to those which he had previously given (ver. 10), as to the *modus operandi* which Moses was to adopt. He was to go to the children of Israel, but not immediately or as the first step. Before making any appeal to them he was, in the first instance, to "gather the elders of Israel together." In this is involved a principle of very general application. When great designs are on hand, consultation should first be with the few. With the few matters can be calmly and quietly discussed, without passion or prejudice; questions can be asked, explanations given. And the few will have influence with the many. This was the whole idea of ancient government, which was by a king, a council, and an assembly of the people, which last was expected to ratify the council's decision. Direct appeal to the masses is, as much as possible, to be avoided. The masses are always, comparatively speaking, ignorant, stolid, unimpressible. Great ideas take root and grow by being first communicated in their fulness to a "little flock," who spread them among their companions and acquaintance, until at length they prevail generally. So our Lord called first the Twelve, and then the Seventy, and made known his doctrine to them, leaving it to them to form the Church after his ascension.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The promises to the elders, and to Moses.* The elders were promised two things: (1) that they should be brought forth out of the affliction of Egypt, and (2) that they should be established in a good land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Ordinary men—men who are, spiritually speaking, backward and undeveloped—require to be stirred to action by comparatively low motives. Escape from present suffering and unpleasantness, enjoyment of happiness in the future—these are practically the two chief moving powers of human action. Neither of them is a wrong motive; and Moses was instructed to appeal to each by a special promise. So may the preacher rightly do with his congregation, the minister with his flock, the father with his children. As long as men are what they are, appeals to the lower motives cannot be dispensed with *at first*. Care must, however, be taken that before each one, as he becomes fit for it, higher motives are set—such as duty, the love of goodness for goodness' sake, and—last, not least—the highest motive of all, the love of God, our Creator, Sustainer, Sanctifier, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Moses was promised at this point, to stimulate him to action, immediate success. He had doubted whether his people would listen to him, or regard him as anything but a dreamer. He is told, "they shall hearken unto thy voice." A great comfort to every one who feels that he has a mission is the acceptance of it by others. Each man, more or less, misdoubts himself, questions his own ability, sincerity, singleness of heart. The seal of an apostleship is the success of the apostolic efforts (1 Cor. ix. 2).

Direct promise of success at the mouth of God was, to one so faithful as Moses, as powerful to cheer, encourage, and sustain, as success itself.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Pharaoh's obduracy, and God's mode of overcoming it.* There are stubborn hearts which no warnings can impress, no lessons teach, no pleading, even of God's Spirit, bend. With such he "will not always strive." After they have resisted him till his patience is exhausted, he will break them, crush them, overrule their opposition, and make it futile. God's will surely triumphs in the end. But it may be long first. God is so patient, so enduring, so long-suffering, that he will permit for months, or even years, the contradiction of sinners against himself. He will not interfere with the exercise of their free-will. He will warn, chide, chasten, afflict, contend with the sinner; try him to the uttermost; seek to lead him to repentance; give him chance after chance. But he will not compel him to submit himself; man may resist to the last; and even "curse God and die" at war with him. The final success in such a struggle cannot, however, rest with man. God "will not always be chiding, neither keepeth he his anger for ever." At the fitting time he "stretches forth his hand and smites" the sinner, strikes him down, or sets him aside, as the storm-wind sets aside a feeble barrier of frail rushes, and works his own will in his own way. Mostly he works by natural causes; but now and again in the history of the world he has asserted himself more openly, and has broken the power and chastised the pride of a Pharaoh, a Benhadad, or a Sennacherib, in a miraculous way. Such manifestations of his might produce a marked effect, causing, as they do, "all the kingdoms of the earth to know that he is the Lord God, and he only" (2 Kings xix. 19).

Vers. 21, 22.—*God brings good out of evil.* Had Pharaoh yielded at the first, the Egyptians would have seen the departure of Israel with regret, and would have in no way facilitated it. The opposition of the king and court, the long struggle, the ill-usage of the Israelites by the monarch who so often promised to release them, and so often retracted his word, awoke a sympathy with the Israelites, and an interest in them, which would have been altogether lacking had there been no opposition, no struggle, no ill-usage. Again, the plagues, especially the last, thoroughly alarmed the Egyptians, and made them anxious to be quit of such dangerous neighbours. "Egypt was glad of their departing, for they were afraid of them" (Ps. cv. 38). But for Pharaoh's obduracy the plagues would not have been sent; and but for the plagues the departing Israelites would not have been looked upon by the Egyptians with the "favour" which led to their going out laden with gifts. Thus Pharaoh's stubbornness, though it led to their sufferings being prolonged, led also to their final triumphant exit, as spoilers, not as spoiled, laden with the good things of Egypt, "jewels of silver and jewels of gold," and rich apparel, the best that the Egyptians had to offer. History presents an infinitude of similar cases, where the greatest advantages have been the result of oppression and wrong. Extreme tyranny constantly leads to the assertion of freedom; anarchy to the firm establishment of law; defeat and ill-usage by a conqueror to the moral recovery of a declining race or nation. Each man's experience will tell him of the good that has arisen to him individually from sickness, from disappointment, from bereavement, from what seemed at the time wholly evil. God brings good out of evil in a thousand marvellous ways; at one time by turning the hearts of oppressors, at another by raising the tone and spirit of the oppressed; now by letting evil run riot until it produces general disgust, anon by making use of adverse circumstances to train a champion and deliverer. Countless are the evidences that God causes evil to work towards good; uses it as an instrument—evolves his own purposes, in part, by its means, vindicating thus his absolute lordship over all, and showing that evil itself, though it fight against him, cannot thwart him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-5.—*Moses at the bush.* We do not now see burning bushes, or hear voices calling to us from their midst. The reason is, that we do not need them. The series of historical revelations is complete. Revelation in the sense of the communication of new truth—of truth beyond the range of our natural faculties, or not capable of being

derived, under the guidance of God's Spirit, from revelations already given—is not to be expected. The Bible is the sum of God's authoritative revelations to the race. This bush, *e.g.*, still burns for us in Scripture, where at any time we can visit it, and hear God's voice speaking out of it. But in another sense, revelation is not obsolete. It is not a tradition of the past, but a living reality. It has its *objective* side in the continuous (non-miraculous) revelation going on in nature (Ps. xix. 1; Rom. i. 19, 20) and history (Acts xvii. 26, 27); and in the tokens of a supernatural presence and working in the Church (Matt. xxviii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 3-10; Rev. ii. 1). And it has its *subjective* side in the revelation (mediate) of Divine things to the soul by the Holy Spirit (Eph. i. 17), and in the manifestation of God to the heart in private spiritual experience (John xiv. 21, 23; Rom. v. 5; viii. 16). The veil between the soul and the spiritual world is at all times a thin one. The avenues by which God can reach devout minds are innumerable. The Word, sacraments, and prayer are special *media*, the Divine Spirit taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul (John xvi. 15), illuminating, interpreting, applying, confirming. But, in truth, God is "not far from every one of us" (Acts xvii. 27); and by events of providence, in workings of conscience, through our moral and spiritual intuitions, enlightened and purified as these are by the Word, by numberless facts of nature and life, he can still draw near to those who tarry for him; meets them in ways as unexpected and surprising as at the burning bush; awes them by his wonders; flashes to them the messages of his grace. Viewing this revelation at the bush as a chapter in spiritual history, consider—

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF IT. The revelation came to Moses—(1) unexpectedly; (2) while in the way of duty—he "kept the flock;" (3) in a solemn place—"mountain of God," a natural oratory and place of sacred repute—and probably while revolving solemn thoughts; (4) from a most unlooked-for quarter—a common bush; and at first (5) impersonally. The bush burning had no apparent relation to Moses more than to another. It was there for him to look at, to inquire into, *if he chose*. It invited, but did not compel, or even ask for, his attention. All which circumstances are significant.

1. *The Divinity is ever nearer to us than we think.* So Jacob, as well as Moses, found it. "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. xxviii. 16). 2. *Revelations are not to be expected, save in the way of duty.* 3. God may be met with anywhere (John iv. 24), but *some places are more favourable for communion with God than others*—the closet (Matt. vi. 6), the sanctuary (Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17), natural solitudes (Matt. xvi. 23). And revelations have usually a relation to the state of mind of those who receive them—answering questions, resolving perplexities, affording guidance, adapting themselves to psychological conditions (cf. Job ii. 12, 13; Dan. ii. 29; ix. 20, 21; x. 2-6; Acts x. 3, 10; 1 Cor. xii. 9; Rev. i. 10). It is in every way likely that Moses' thoughts were at that moment deeply occupied about Israel's future. 4. *God's discoveries of himself are marked by great condescension.* Lowliness of situation is no bar to the visits of the King of Heaven, while humility of heart is indispensable to our receiving them. He who dwelt in the bush will not refuse the dwelling place of the contrite heart (Is. lvii. 15). God's most wonderful discoveries of himself have been made through "base things of the world, and things which are despised" (1 Cor. ii. 28). The highest example of this is Christ himself, of whose incarnation the angel in the bush may be regarded as a prophecy. "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness," etc. (Is. liii. 2).

5. *God's revelations act as a moral test.* This applies to the objective revelation—to the tokens of the supernatural strewn everywhere around us in life and history, as well as to Nature and the Bible. We may pass them unheeded, or we may draw nearer to inquire. The Bible invites attention by the supernatural in its history, as well as by its teachings. It is only when we draw nearer to it that the Word becomes personal, and seizes on the conscience with spiritual power. Attention on man's part is rewarded by further self-discovery on God's.

II. ITS INTEREST FOR MOSES. We may connect his turning aside to see (ver. 4)—

1. *With an appeal to his faculty of wonder.* This is one function of miracle—to arrest attention, and awaken in the witness of it a powerful consciousness of the Divine presence. 2. *With a general habit of devout inquiry.* It may be true that "many a man has been led through the pale of curiosity into the sanctuary of reverence"

(Packer); but it is also true that to a merely curious disposition God usually reveals little, and to an irreverent one nothing. The habit of inquiry is as valuable, if one's ultimate aim is in all things to become acquainted with God and his will, as in science and philosophy, or any other form of the pursuit of knowledge; but let inquiry be devout. "Search the Scriptures" (John v. 39). Ponder thoughtfully events of providence and facts of history. Study Nature with an eye to spiritual suggestions—to underlying spiritual analogies. Give to whatever you read or hear, which seems to have truth or value in it, the attention it deserves. Inquiry throws the mind into the attitude most favourable for receiving Divine revelations. Moses was not called by name till he "turned aside to see." 3. *With the perception that in this circumstance God was specially calling him to inquire.* As Moses gazed, he would be prompted to ask about this bush—What means it? What invisible power is here manifesting itself? Why is it burning at this place, and at this time? What mystery is contained in it? Has it a message for me? And he would not be long in perceiving that it must be burning there with the special view of attracting his attention. And is it not thus that the Divine usually draws near to us? Attention is arrested by something a little aside from the course of ordinary experience, and the impression it makes upon us produces the conviction that it is not unintended; that it is, as we say, "sent;" that it has a meaning and message to us we do well to look into. Every man, at some point or another in his history, has felt himself thus appealed to by the supernatural. The impression may be made by a book we feel drawn to read, or by something we read in it; through a sermon, through some event of life, by a sickness, at a deathbed, by the sayings and doings of fellow-men, or in hours of solitude, when even Nature seems peopled with strange voices, and begins to speak to us in parables. But, originate as it may, there is plainly in it, as in all special dealings of God with us, a call to inquire, to question ourselves, to ask whether, from the midst of the mystery, God may not have some further message for our souls.

III. THE SIGHT ITSELF. The bush that burned (ver. 2) was—1. *A token of the Divine Presence.* Moses would soon feel that he was standing in presence of the Unseen Holy. 2. *A significant emblem.* It represented the Israelites in their state of affliction, yet miraculously surviving. Possibly, in the questionings of his spirit, Moses had not before sufficiently considered the "token for good" implied in this astonishing preservation of the nation, and needed to have his attention directed to it. It was a clear proof that the Lord had not cast off his people. If Israel was preserved, it could only be for one reason. The continued vitality, growth, and vigour of the nation was the infallible pledge of the fulfilment of the promise. 3. *An answer to prayer.* For what could be the meaning of this portent, but that the long, weary silence was at length broken; that the prayer, "O Lord, how long?" was at last to receive its answer? Faith can see great results wrapped up in small beginnings. For nothing in God's procedure is isolated. Beginnings with God mean endings too.

IV. THE PERSONAL CALL. As Moses wondered—1. *The revelation became personal.* He heard himself addressed by name, "Moses, Moses" (ver. 4). Solemnised, yet with that presence of mind which could only arise from long habituation to the idea of an invisible spiritual world, he answered, "Here am I." This was to place himself unreservedly at God's disposal. Mark the order—(1) God revealing (ver. 1); (2) man attending (ver. 2); (3) the revelation becoming personal (ver. 3). Then followed the direction (ver. 5), "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes," etc. Thus Moses was instructed: 2. *As to the right attitude towards God's revelations.* (1) Self-surrender; (2) reverence; (3) obedience. Moses doubtless obeyed the injunction he received. These qualities meet in all true religion: humility in hearing what God has to say; submission of mind and heart to it when said; readiness to obey. Glance for a moment at the requirement of *reverence*. One can understand how in the tumult of his feelings at the moment—in the very eagerness of his spirit to hear what further God had to say to him—Moses should be in danger of neglecting the outward tokens of the reverence which no doubt he felt; but it is instructive to observe that God recalls his attention to them. We are thus taught that reverence becomes us, not only in relation to God himself, but in relation to whatever is even outwardly connected with his presence, worship, or revelation. *E.g.*, in our dealing with Scripture, in the use of Divine names and titles, in the ritual of Divine service. The attitude of the spirit is doubtless the

main thing; but a reverent spirit will seek for itself suitable forms of expression; and respect for the forms is itself a duty, and an aid in the education of the sentiment. Those are greatly to be censured who, presuming on a supposed special intimacy with God not granted to others, venture to take liberties, and allow themselves in a demeanour and in a style of expression to the Almighty at the least irreverently familiar, and not unfrequently bordering on profanity. Raptures of piety, however sincere, do not justify us in forgetting that in communion with God we stand on "holy ground."—J. O.

Vers. 1-5.—*The bush and its suggestions.* Glean here a few of the general suggestions of the passage:—

I. REVELATION. The appearance at the bush suggestive—1. Of the supernatural *in Nature*. Bushes are aglow all around us, if only we had eyes to see them. Christ's teaching an illustration of the spiritual suggestiveness of Nature. "Consider the lilies" (Matt. vi. 28). The parables. 2. Of the supernatural *in common life*. "Moses kept the flock of Jethro." The Higher Presence may be with us in the humblest occupations. 3. Of the supernatural *in the Church*—(1) As a whole; (2) Individual believers. The bush, burning but not consumed, an emblem of Israel—of the Church—enduring in tribulation. 4. Of the *higher supernatural of positive revelation*. Authoritative revelation is suspended, but the sum of its results is given in Scripture. The Bible is the Bush of revelation, to which the student of Divine things will do well to direct his attention.

II. PREPAREDNESS. Cultivate with Moses—1. A spirit of duty (ver. 1). 2. A spirit of devout inquiry (ver. 3). 3. A spirit of *humility and reverence* (vers. 5, 6). To such a spirit, God—1. Reveals himself. 2. Addresses calls to his service (ver. 4). 3. Gives work to do. 4. Honours in its work.—J. O.

Ver. 2.—*The bush in history.* The bush had primary reference to Israel, and the fire in the bush represented Jehovah's fiery presence in the midst of his people—1. For their *protection*. A fire flaming forth to consume the adversaries. 2. For their *purification*. God was in the fires that tried them, as well as in the power that upheld them. The fire was thus a figurative representation at once of destroying punishment and of refining affliction. But the bush, while burning, was not consumed. This involves the principle that nothing, however weak and perishable in itself, with which God connects his presence, or which he wills to continue in existence, can by any possibility be destroyed. From this point of view—a thoroughly legitimate one—the emblem admits of various applications, and directs our attention to a series of supernatural facts yet greater than itself, and well deserving our turning aside to see. 1. There is the obvious application to *the Church*, which to a thoughtful mind, pondering as it should the facts of history, is a veritable repetition of the wonder of the bush "burning but not consumed." The bush is an emblem of the Church in the other respect of outward plainness and unattractiveness. And it is noteworthy that the times when the Church has forgotten her calling to be meek and lowly in heart, and has aspired to great outward splendour, and been ambitious of worldly supremacy, have invariably been times of marked decline in purity and spirituality. She fares best when content with modest outward pretensions. 2. A second application is to *the nation of the Jews*—also a "sign and wonder" in history (see Keble's hymn, "The Burning Bush"). 3. A third is to *the Bible*. What enmity has this book encountered, and what fierce attempts have been made to disprove its claims, destroy its influence, sometimes even to banish it from existence! Yet the miraculous bush survives, and retains to this hour its greenness and freshness, as if no fire had ever passed upon it. 4. Yet another application is to *individual believers*, against whom, while tried by fiery trials (1 Pet. iv. 12), neither the enmity of man, the assaults of Satan, nor providential afflictions and calamities (Job i.) are permitted to prevail, but who, under all, enjoy a support, a peace, a comfort, plainly supernatural—"dying, and behold we live" (2 Cor. vi. 9). Flippant observers may see in these things nothing worthy of peculiar attention—nothing which cannot be explained by ordinary historical causes; but sober minds will not readily agree with them. They will regard the facts now referred to as truly "great sights," and will, like Moses, reverently turn aside to inquire into them

further. Note—1. The true glory of the Church is God in her midst. 2. The outward weakness of the Church enhances the wonder of her preservation. 3. The Church has most reason to glory in those periods of her history when she has been most despised and persecuted (Matt. v. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 9; 1 Pet. iv. 14).—J. O.

Ver. 6.—*The God of the fathers.* “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham,” etc. In these words—

I. GOD CONNECTS HIMSELF WITH THE DEAD PATRIARCHS. They imply—1. *Continued existence*; for God, who says here, not “I was,” but “I am, the God of thy father,” is, as Christ reminds us, “not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. xxii. 32). The personal relation was not dissolved. The patriarchs still lived to him. 2. *The resurrection of the body.* This will not appear a far-fetched inference, if we consider the nature of the Bible hope of immortality. The Bible has little or nothing to say of an abstract “immortality of the soul.” It nowhere regards the disembodied state as in itself desirable. The immortality it speaks of is the immortality of the “man”—of man in his whole complex personality of body, soul, and spirit. This implies a resurrection. The life forfeited by sin was a life in the body, and so must be the life restored by Redemption. The covenant-promise could not fall below the hopes of the heathen; and even Egyptian theology held by the notion of a revival of the body, as essential to perfected existence. Hence the practice of embalming, with which compare the care of the body by the patriarchs.

II. CONNECTS THIS REVELATION WITH PAST REVELATIONS, AS ONE OF A SERIES. It introduces what is to be said as the fulfilment of what had been already promised.

III. CONNECTS HIMSELF WITH THE EXISTING GENERATION. The God of the fathers is, in virtue of the promise, the God of the children.—J. O.

Vers. 7—11.—*God's sympathy with the oppressed.* I. GOD IS EVER IN SYMPATHY WITH THE OPPRESSED, AND AGAINST THEIR OPPRESSORS (vers. 7, 9). This is now, thanks to the Bible, made as certain to us as any truth can be. God's sympathy may be viewed—1. *As implied in his moral perfection.* 2. *As certified to us by the pity of our own hearts.* He who put pity in these hearts must surely himself be pitiful. Yet, so much is there in the world which bears a different aspect, that—3. *It needs revelation to assure us of it*—to put the fact beyond all doubt. And the revelation has been given. No student of God's character in the Bible can doubt that he compassionates. (1) His words declare it. (2) His deeds attest it. (3) The Cross demonstrates it. And, whatever mystery surrounds God's ways at present, he will one day make it plain by exacting a terrible retribution for all wrongs done to the defenceless (Ps. xii. 5; Jas. v. 4). 1. Comfort for the oppressed. Not one of their sighs escapes the ear of God. 2. Warning to the oppressor.

II. GOD IS PECULIARLY IN SYMPATHY WITH THE OPPRESSED, WHEN THE OPPRESSED ARE HIS OWN PEOPLE (vers. 7, 10). Israel was God's people—1. *As Abraham's seed*—children of the covenant—far gone indeed from righteousness, yet beloved for the fathers' sake (Rom. xi. 28). 2. *As retaining, in however corrupt a form, the worship of the true God.* They were his people, in a sense in which the worshippers of Osiris, and Thoth, and the other gods of Egypt, were not. 3. *As containing many true believers.* There was a spiritual Israel within the natural—an “holy seed” (Is. vi. 13)—“a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. xi. 5). Therefore, because Israel was God's people, God was deeply interested in them. He knew their sorrows. He was zealous on their behalf, as One whose own honour was concerned in what they suffered. And as in all their affliction he was afflicted (Is. lxiii. 9), so when the time came, he would avenge them of their adversaries. Believers have the same consolation in enduring trial (2 Thess. 4—10).

III. GOD'S SYMPATHY WITH THE OPPRESSED IS SHOWN BY HIS MERCIFULLY INTERPOSING ON THEIR BEHALF. As he interposed for Israel—as he has often interposed for his Church since—as he interposed for the salvation of the world, when, moved by our pitiable state under sin—afflicted and “oppressed of the devil” (Acts x. 38; xxvi. 18; Eph. ii. 2; Col. i. 13)—he sent his Son that “we should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16). His sympathy with his Church is shown, not only in the comforts he imparts, and the grace by which he upholds, but in the

deliverances he sends; on which remark—1. God has his own times for them. 2. Till the time comes, his people must be content to wait. 3. When it comes, no power can hinder the execution of his purpose. 4. The deliverance will bring with it compensation for all that has been endured—"a good land," etc. The *ultimate* compensation, when God has brought his people up out of the Egypt of all their afflictions, and planted them in the land of perfected bliss, will be such as to clear his character from all imputations of injustice and unkindness.—J. O.

Vers. 10—12.—*Insufficiency.* A very different Moses this from the hero who was formerly so ready, even without a call, to undertake the work of Israel's deliverance. Probably failure in that first attempt led him to doubt whether he was the instrument ordained for so great a task. He may have concluded he was not, and learned his first lesson of acquiescence in the Divine will, by surrendering the hope. Or, he may have thought himself rejected for his fault. In any case, Moses had now much juster views of the magnitude of the work, and of his natural unfitness to undertake it. Who was he—a man of lonely, self-retired spirit—that he should brave the power of the Pharaohs, or think of bringing Israel out of Egypt?

Learn—1. *Conscious unfitness for our work is one of the best preparations for it.* The greatest of God's servants have had this feeling in a remarkable degree. They needed to be "thrust forth" to the harvest (Matt. x. 38, Gr.). 2. *Conscious unfitness for work grows with the clearness of our apprehensions of the Divine call to it.* The nearer we are brought to God, the less we feel fit to serve him (Is. vi. 5). 3. *God's call and promise are sufficient reasons for undertaking any work, however deep our consciousness of personal unfitness.* "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 6). The sign in ver. 12 was a pledge to Moses that God would "make all grace to abound toward" him (2 Cor. ix. 8).—J. O.

Vers. 15—16.—*The Name.* The request of Moses to know the name of the Being who had filled him with such unutterable awe (ver. 6), rested on ideas deeply rooted in ancient modes of thought. The "name" with us tends to become an arbitrary symbol—a mere vocable. But this is not the true idea of a name. A real name expresses the *nature* of that to which it is given. It is significant. This idea of the name is the ruling one in scientific nomenclature, where names are not imposed arbitrarily, but are designed to express exactly the essential characteristics of the object or fact of Nature for which a name is sought. The man of science interrogates Nature—allows it to reveal *itself*. He stands before his fact, asking—"Tell me, I pray thee, thy name?" (Gen. xxxii. 29), and the name but expresses the properties which come to light as the result of the interrogation. Hence, as science progresses, old names are superseded by new ones—the former no longer proving adequate to the stage at which knowledge has arrived. This illustrates in some degree the ancient idea of a name, and the desire that was felt at each new stage of revelation for a new name of God. God's Name is the revelation of his attributes or essence—the disclosure of some part or aspect of the fulness of his Deity. The vocable is valueless in itself—its significance is derived from the fact of revelation of which it is the memorial. To know God's *absolute* Name—the Name, if one might so speak, wherewith he names himself, would be to wrest from him the secret of his absolute existence. And Jacob was rebuked when, in this sense, he sought to wrest from God his Name (Gen. xxxii. 29). God's *revealed* Name expresses that of his Nature which is communicable and comprehensible—his attributes in their relations to the intelligence and needs of the creature. Each of his names is but part of the whole—a ray. The whole Name is given in the completed revelation. (An illustration of the extent to which in ancient times name and reality were held to interpenetrate each other is furnished by the practice of conjuration—the name being viewed as so truly a living part of the Being, so bound up with his essence and qualities, that to know it was to obtain a certain power over him.)

I. THE NAME ASKED (ver. 13). Moses expected that this would be the first question the people would ask him—"What is his Name?" 1. It was *natural* to expect that a Being announcing himself, would do so by *some* name, either a name by which he was already known, or a new one given in the revelation. 2. It was *probable*, in analogy with past history, that the name would be a new one, and would serve—(1) As

a memorial of the revelation; (2) As an exponent of its significance; (3) As a clue to God's purpose in it; and (4) As a name by which God might suitably be invoked in the new crisis of their nation's history. And 3. It was *certain* that the people would ask this question, familiarised as they were in Egypt with the practice of invoking the gods by the one or other of their many names which bore particularly on the wants and circumstances of the worshippers. To Moses, however, this request for the Name had a much deeper significance. It originated, we may believe, in the felt inadequacy of all existing names of God to syllable the deep and powerful impression made on him by this actual contact with the Divine. Cf. Jacob at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 24—30). God in that hour was nameless to the spirit of Moses—his experience of God went beyond any name he knew for him. A multitude of ideas crowded on him, and he could not fix or express them. Language thus fails us in moments of extraordinary experience, not always because none of the words we know would suit our purpose, but because language tends to become conventional, and the profounder meaning which lies in words gets rubbed off them. The name which God gave was after all not a new one, but an old name with new life put into it.

II. THE NAME GIVEN (vers. 14, 15). God grants his servant's request. The name is given first *explicitly*,—"I am that I am" (ver. 14), then as a *denominative*—"Jehovah" (ver. 15); while he who gives it expressly claims for himself, as formerly (ver. 6), that he is the God of the old covenants—the "Jehovah God" of the fathers (vers. 15, 16). 1. The name, as above remarked, while new in this relation, is *itself an old one*. This is already implied in the expression—"Jehovah God of your fathers" (ver. 16); and is proved by its occurrence in the earlier history, and by the name of Moses' own mother—Jochebed (ch. vi. 20), "she whose glory is Jehovah." This old and half-obsolete name God revives, and makes it the key-word of a new era of revelation. 2. *He who assumes the name is the "Angel of Jehovah" of ver. 1.* The Angel—"a self-presentation of Jehovah entering into the sphere of the creature, which is one in essence with Jehovah; and is yet again different from him" (Oehler). The soundest view is that which regards the "Angel" as the Pre-incarnate Logos—the Divine Son. 3. The name was *eminently suitable and significant*. The ideas awakened in Moses by the revelation he had received would be such as these—God's living Personality; his enduring Existence (the same God that spoke to the fathers of old, speaking to him at Horeb); his covenant-keeping Faithfulness; his Self-identity in will and purpose; his unfailing Power (the bush burning unconsumed); his Mercy and Compassion. All these ideas are expressed in the name Jehovah, which represents the highest reach of Old Testament revelation. That name denotes God as—1. Personal. 2. Self-existent. 3. Eternal. 4. Independent of his creatures. 5. Self-identical. 6. Self-revealing and gracious. Hence—1. Changeless in his purpose. 2. Faithful to his promises. 3. Able to fulfil them. 4. Certain to do so.—J. O.

Vers. 16—22.—*The two messages.* I. THE MESSAGE TO THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL (vers. 16—18). Moses was to go *first* to the elders of the people. First—before he went to Pharaoh; and first—before communicating with any of the people. This arrangement was—1. *Necessary*. The people's consent must be obtained to their own deliverance. God would have them co-operate with him—(1) Freely. (2) Intelligently; would carry them with him as free agents in all he did. This applies to the higher Redemption. Men cannot be saved without their own consent. We must, in the sense of Phil. ii. 12, work out our own salvation—must co-operate with God, by freely adopting and falling in with his method of grace. There must be free choice of Christ as our Saviour, free compliance with the directions of the Gospel, free co-operation with the Spirit in the work of our sanctification. 2. *Wise*. The elders were the representatives of the people. They had a claim to be approached first. They were men of experience, and were better able to judge deliberately of the proposals laid before them. They had exceptional facilities for diffusing information, while communication with them would have the additional advantage of greater privacy. If Moses could satisfy the elders of his Divine commission, and could gain their intelligent consent to his proposals, the consent of the people would readily be forthcoming. So Paul, in going up to Jerusalem, communicated the Gospel he had received "privately to them which were of reputation,"—to "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be

pillars" (Gal. ii. 2—9). And it was not till Jesus had been decisively rejected by the authorities in Jerusalem that he commenced a popular ministry in Galilee. Learn lessons—(1) Of the respect due to constituted authorities. (2) Of the value of representative institutions. (3) Of the need of prudence and caution in the initiation and conduct of public movements. 3. *Kindly*. No time was to be lost in carrying to the Israelites the tidings of approaching deliverance. The message brought to them was a true gospel. Mark its nature. It told how God had seen their affliction, and had visited them, and would redeem them from bondage. This gives no sanction to Ewald's theory, that the Exodus had its origin in a powerful movement in the nation itself—"the most extraordinary exertions, and most noble activities of the spirit wrestling for freedom." The narrative says nothing of this mighty spiritual movement, but represents the people as lying hopeless and helpless till God visited them; their help did not come from themselves, but from God. The two views well illustrate the two ways of conceiving the possibility of man's deliverance from the woes that oppress him. The one—the humanitarian—trusts to recuperative powers inherent in the race, to its own "extraordinary exertions" and noble spiritual activities—and predicts for it a glorious future wrought out by its own efforts. The other—the Christian—has no such hope. It views the race as lying in a state of moral and spiritual helplessness, and recognises the necessity of a salvation coming to it from without. "We look," says Neander, "upon Christianity, not as a power that has sprung up out of the hidden depths of man's nature, but as one which descended from above, when heaven opened itself anew to man's long-alienated race; a power which, as both in its origin and essence it is exalted above all that human nature can create out of its own resources, was designed to impart to that nature a new life, and to change it in its inmost principles."

II. THE MESSAGE TO PHARAOH (ver. 18). Moses, with the elders, was to go to Pharaoh, and demand of him that the Hebrews be allowed to take a three days' journey into the wilderness, there to sacrifice to Jehovah. Note on this request—1. Its *honesty*. The ultimate design was to lead Israel out of Egypt altogether. If this first request was studiously made moderate, it was not with the intention of deceiving Pharaoh, but that it might be the easier for him to grant it. The demand was made in perfectly good faith. What was asked sufficed to test the king's disposition. Had Pharaoh yielded, no advantage would have been taken of his compliance to effect a dishonourable escape from Egypt. New announcements would doubtless have been made to him, rewarding him as amply for obedience to this first word of God as afterwards he was punished for disobedience to it, and informing him further of the Divine intentions. 2. Its *incompleteness*. For this demand bore on the face of it that it was not the whole. It told Pharaoh his immediate duty, but beyond that left matters in a position requiring further revelation. Whatever was to follow the three days' journey, it was certain that "the God of the Hebrews," who had met with them, would never consent to his worshippers being sent back again to bondage. That Pharaoh must plainly enough have perceived, and Moses made no attempt to dissemble it. Learn—(1) God's counsels are revealed to men bit by bit. (2) When present duty is revealed to us, we ought to act on that, though ignorant of all that is to follow. (3) God partially hides his counsels from men, that the spirit of obedience may be tested. (4) The gravest consequences may hang on first acts of obedience or disobedience.

III. PHARAOH'S REJECTION OF GOD'S MESSAGE (vers. 18—22.) 1. It was foreseen by God (ver. 19). Yet—2. It did not hinder the execution of God's purpose (ver. 20). Whether Pharaoh willed or not, the Exodus would take place. If not with his consent, then against it, and "by a mighty hand." Pharaoh's disobedience would be overruled—(1) To God's glory. The clay cannot escape from the hand of the potter (Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 21). If Pharaoh will not be made a vessel unto honour, he will be moulded into a vessel unto dishonour, and made to subserve God's purpose in another way (ch. ix. 16). (2) To his own hurt (ver. 20). His disobedience would bring on him wrath and destruction. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" (Is. xlv. 9). (3) To the enrichment of the people (vers. 21—22). The Egyptians would be glad in the end to give the Hebrews whatever they wished. So would they "spoil the Egyptians." Believers' trials tend to their ultimate enrichment (2 Cor. iv. 18). And it is the saints of God who shall yet inherit the earth. Learn also that whatever is

valuable in the world's learning, science, literature, or art, is not to be despised, but to be freely appropriated by the Church, and used in God's service.—J. O.

Vers. 1-5.—*The burning bush.* I. OBSERVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH GOD FINDS MOSES. He is still with Jethro, although forty years have passed since their first acquaintance. Though a fugitive, he had not become a mere wanderer. 1. *He continues, however, in a comparatively humble position.* His marriage to Jethro's daughter and his long stay in the country do not seem to have brought him much external prosperity. He has not reached even the modest point of success in the eyes of a Midianite shepherd, viz. to have a flock of his own. But this very humility of position doubtless had its advantages and its place in the providence of God with respect to him. With all the lowliness of his state, it was better to be a living man in Midian than to have been slain as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. God had brought him out of a king's house, so that he might be freed from all the temptations of soft raiment, and also to make manifest that, although among courtiers, he was not of them. But if during his stay in Midian he had increased in pastoral wealth, and become a second Job (Job i. 3), then, like Job, he might have had to go into humiliation because of his wealth. It was well for him that while he had the care of property, he had not the cares of it (Jam. i. 10, 11). 2. *God finds him engaged in faithful service,* leading his flock far into the desert that they might find suitable pasture. God comes to those who are diligently occupied in some useful work, even if it be as humble and obscure as that of Moses. He does not come with his revelations to day-dreamers; they are left to build their castles in the air. They who despise common and daily work, on the pretext that they are fitted for something much better, will at last be thrown into the corner among the refuse. "Let those that think themselves buried alive be content to shine like lamps in sepulchres, and wait till God's time comes for setting them in a candlestick" (Matt. iv. 18-22, ix. 9; Luke ii. 8).

II. GOD APPROACHES MOSES WITH A SUDDEN TEST. "The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush" i.e. the flame of fire became a messenger of God to Moses. We are told in Psalm civ. that God is he who makes the clouds his chariot, walks upon the wings of the wind, makes the winds his messengers, and flaming fire into his ministers (Heb. i. 7). And so here God sends this flame of fire, encompassing and attacking the bush, *in order to discover what sort of man Moses is.* Certain features of his character, viz. his patriotism, his hatred of oppression, his prompt action to serve the weak, have hitherto been exhibited rather than tested. He had shown what sort of man he was in the ordinary experiences of life, such experiences as might come to any of us. But now he is face to face with an extraordinary experience, a sudden and unexpected test. The burning bush was to Moses what both miracles and parables were to those who came into contact with Jesus. To some the miracles were mere wonders; to others they revealed an open door of communication with God. To some the parables were only aimless narratives, mere story-telling. To others the Divine Teacher was able to say, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xiii. 11). And, in a similar way, when Moses came suddenly upon the burning bush, there was also a sudden revelation of the state of his heart. He did not treat the phenomenon as a delusion; did not begin to suspect his own sanity; did not seek his kindred, that they might come and gape at this new wonder. It was impressed upon his mind exactly as it was meant to be impressed. He asked the very question that above all others needed to be asked—why this bush was not consumed. For observe that it was something which in ordinary circumstances would be easily and quickly consumed (ch. xxii. 6; Eccl. vii. 6; Matt. vi. 30). It was not some metal well used to the fire, but a bush actually burning yet not burning away. And as this burning bush was thus a test to Moses, so the record of it is also a test to us. Let us suppose the question put all round, "What would you have done if you had been there?" We know well the answer that would come from one class of minds: "There was no such thing; it was all Moses' own imagination." Thus the test comes in. As God tested Moses in exhibiting the burning bush as his messenger, so he tests us by the record of this and all other unusual occurrences with which the Scriptures are crowded. If we say at once concerning the burning bush and all that is supernatural that it is but delusion,

then God's way to our hearts and our salvation is blocked at once. We must be loyal to fact wherever we find it. The very evidence of our own senses, and the accumulated testimony of honest and competent witnesses, are not to be sacrificed to so-called first principles of rational inquiry. The right spirit is that shown by Peter and his companion in the house of Cornelius. They saw with their own eyes that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household; and Peter made his inferences and his action to depend on this indisputable fact (Acts x. 44; xi. 18). When Moses turned aside to see the great sight his eye was single; he did not quibble and despise; and therefore his whole body was filled with light.

III. GOD MEETS A PROPER INQUIRY WITH PROPER TREATMENT. Moses is approaching the burning bush to investigate the difficulty by his natural faculties, when *God at once arrests him, making known his own presence, and enjoining such outward marks of reverence as became the place and the occasion.* And Moses, as we might expect, is immediately obedient. Those who have in them the spirit that seeks for truth, the spirit of faith and right inquiry, will also show a spirit ready at once to respond to the presence of God. Moses must have had those principles in his life which pointed on to perfect purity of heart. That purity he had in its beginnings, or he would not have gained such a sense of God's presence as was here bestowed on him. Note next, that *God does not proceed to answer the inquiry of Moses.* There was really no occasion to answer it. When Moses knew that the presence of God had to do with the miracle, he knew enough. To know exactly how God had done it was beyond him. Even God cannot explain the inexplicable. The secrets of creation cannot be penetrated by those who lack creative power. Man can make machines; therefore the man who makes a machine can explain the purpose and the parts of it to another man. Human beings are the parents of human beings; but as they have no power to make intelligently any living thing, so they cannot understand either how living things are brought into existence or sustained in it. God calls Moses now, not to explain why the bush is burning, but to subdue his mind into appropriate reverence and expectation. The search for truth must not degenerate into curiosity, nor be pursued into presumption.

IV. THOUGH GOD LEAVES THE INQUIRY FORMALLY UNANSWERED, YET THE BURNING BUSH DOES SERVE SOME FURTHER PURPOSE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INSTRUCTION. *There was much teaching in this burning bush.* If the aim had been merely to arrest the attention of Moses, then any wonder would have served the purpose. But the wonders of God not only test; they also teach. They must be something unusual, or they would not test sufficiently; they must be something more than merely unusual, else they would not teach. *The bush was Israel in the flame of Egypt.* That bush had been burning now a century, more or less, yet it was not consumed. All that was essential to its nature, its growth, and its fruitfulness still remained. What was permanent in Israel was no more affected than the tree is by the fading and falling of its leaves in autumn. The leaves die, but the tree remains. Its roots are still in the soil and the sap still in the trunk. Thus, by this exhibition of the burning bush, God brought before Moses the great truth that, however natural forces may be gathered against his people, and however they may be intensified in their attack, there is nevertheless a power from on high which can resist them all—a secret, countervailing power in which we may ever put our trust. And this power is not only for preservation in the midst of affliction, but for ultimate deliverance from it. The power by which God can keep the bush from being consumed, is a power by which he can take it out of the fire altogether. Believe in this power, and trust it more and more, and God will lead you into sublime conclusions, and endow you with most precious privileges.—Y.

Ver. 6.—*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*—Having wakened the mind of Moses into full activity, given him a revelation of supernatural power, and brought him altogether into a state of the greatest reverence and awe, God proceeds to a revelation of himself in a particular aspect—an aspect which required and repaid the most earnest attention. Notice that, unlike the revelation of the name I AM (ver. 13), it was *unsolicited.*

1. CONSIDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NAME TO MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.
1. *It was a confident reference to the past.* Moses might look back on his own career, or that of his people to whom he belonged, with a measure of shame, doubt, humilia-

tion, and disappointment; but God could point back to all his dealings with men as consistent, glorious, and worthy of all remembrance. 2. *It provided a certain kind of mediatorship in the knowledge of God.* It gave the best way for Moses and Israel to think of God, at that particular time. It was as if God had said to Moses, "You are to gain your chief sense of my nearness to Israel and abiding interest in them by thinking of my actual, repeated, and recorded dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." No devout Israelite could become acquainted with that section of Genesis, from the time when God first appeared to Abram down to the death of Jacob, without feeling that the God of these three men was even a more prominent figure in the history than they are themselves. We could as easily leave out the name of Abraham from the narrative, as leave out the name of God. What we are told of Abraham is nothing, save as the effect and expression of the will of God. Abram is as a mere name, till God comes in contact with him. It is not so much a life of Abraham we are reading, as a history of how God's purposes and power became manifest in his experience. 3. *It kept before Moses the connexion of God with the lives of individuals.* God made separate appearances to each of these three men, dealing with them according to their circumstances and their character. He showed his continual and unflinching observation of their lives, by revealing his presence at every critical point. 4. *There was a connexion of peculiar importance which God had with some individuals rather than with others.* He was the God of Adam, of Enoch, and of Noah; why not have associated himself with these illustrious names? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stood towards Israel in the relation of one who had made large promises, allowed himself to become the source of large expectations, and imposed strict requirements. He was not only the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, taken separately, but of these three men, bound together in a very peculiar way. Not only did they stand in a lineal succession, Abraham being father to Isaac, and Isaac father to Jacob, but that succession was contrary to natural expectations and customary arrangements. Isaac was the son of Abraham, but also a son born when the resources of nature were exhausted. Jacob was the son of Isaac, but also the younger son, on whom, contrary to custom, the privileges of the firstborn alighted. Thus it became impossible to describe God as the God of Abraham and Ishmael, though in a certain sense he was the God of Ishmael (Gen. xvii. 20). Nor could he be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau, though assuredly he was the God of Esau also. The only name which would indicate to Moses all he had to bear in mind, was the name which God here employs. 5. *He was the God of these men in spite of great defects of character and great blots on conduct.* They were men in whom he found much that was evil, much that indicated a low moral state, but he found in them all, and particularly in the first of them, a spirit of faith which enabled him to begin, as from a certain definite point in history, that work which is to end in all nations of the earth being blessed. Already he had made a great nation out of Abram—a persecuted and oppressed nation indeed, but none the less a great one. And had he not spoken to Abram concerning this very bondage in Egypt? (Gen. xv. 13, 14). Some such revelation as this at Horeb, to some deliverer or other, might now be expected. It must surely have been often a perplexity to Moses, what had become of this God who had done so much for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

II. CONSIDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NAME TO US. We are not mere spectators of the way in which the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob approved himself as also the God of Moses and the Israelites in Egypt and in the wilderness. To speak of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is only another way of speaking of the God of those who really believe in him. Whenever a real believer ponders this name, then it becomes one of precious associations; it leads by the very mention of it, further and further onwards in subjection to the invisible. But after all, this name, so deeply impressed on Moses, is chiefly valuable to us as suggesting a name far richer in meaning and in power. We have a look into the past which Moses had not. He looked backward and saw God's dealings with Abraham, and found in them everything to inspire faith in God and expectation from him. We look backward and see, not only Abraham, but Christ; not only Isaac, but Christ; not only Jacob, but Christ. When we look back to these men of *Genesis*, we see faith standing out like an isolated mountain in the midst of a plain; but we see much also that we would rather not see. Whereas, when we look back to Christ we see not only a full believer, but a flawless life. In him there

stands the chief of those that walk by faith, the *facile princeps* of them—he who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. His faith was such a full, exalted element of his character, that it needs much effort on our part to grasp the fact that, while here below, Jesus, as much as all the rest of us, needed to walk by faith, and was constantly compelled to struggle with unbelief. The great Jehovah is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; also the God of Paul and every true apostle. Suppose Moses could have had the spirits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob appear to him in Horeb, and assure him that the God of the burning bush was the God who had dealt with them in the days of their flesh; would not this have been reckoned a most confirming and exhilarating testimony? And we, practically, have a testimony of this sort. We read of Jesus regarding God as his Father, habitually and in the most appropriating way. We have his actual experience for our comfort, our inspiration, and our guide. If an Israelite was asked what God he believed, tried to serve, and had his highest expectations from, his best answer was, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” So we, if asked a similar question, can give no better answer than “The God of Christ and the God of Paul: the God who has ever been the same through all vicissitudes of his Church; ever loving, faithful, and sustaining.”—Y.

Vers. 7—9.—*A large promise for a great need.* I. THE GREAT NEED. *It is a need carefully observed by God and well known to him.* This has been recorded already, although hardly so emphatically, in ch. ii. 23—25. It is one thing to have intelligence of God’s interest communicated by some third person; quite another to hear the words of pity warm and tender from God himself. Moses and many of the Israelites may have thought that they knew the need only too well, bitter as their experiences had been; but, with all their experiences, they knew not that need as God knew it, looking down from heaven, seeing all things with his searching eye, and having a correct and complete knowledge of them. It is with great force that God represents himself seeing as well as hearing. Hearing indicated that he noted the representation of their troubles and needs which the people themselves made; seeing indicated the investigation he made for himself. God was not dependent upon the complaints of the people for his knowledge of their troubles. The cries of men are not always worthy of pity, any more than the cry of a spoiled child. Such cries can only be left unheeded, with the hope that they may end in wisdom and submission. But the cry of Israel was the cry of the oppressed, the cry of God’s people; and, as God saw their state, there was ample evidence of the oppression and the cruelty. When he came down to meet Moses at Horeb, he needed not to listen to a long account of Israel’s troubles; he came not in order that he might inquire, but because of what he already fully knew.

II. THE LARGE PROMISE. God may be long unmanifested, but, when he appears, it is with indubitable proofs of his presence; he may be long silent, but when he speaks, it is with statements and promises worthy of himself. He does not merely utter an expression of sympathy with suffering Israel; that expression is only the starting word of a large undertaking for the future. He repeats, emphatically, the essence of all he had ever said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning their posterity. He has distinctly in view, not only the removal of a burden, but a future of liberty, independence, and blessedness. Thus it became manifest that the deliverance had not come earlier in time because the matter of deliverance was not the only thing in question. It had to be considered how liberty should be used when acquired. Israel needed a leader, and the leaders whom God approves are not made in a day. Israel had to wait while Moses went through his eighty years of varied discipline. Then, moreover, the people were going into a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of rich pastures and great fertility, a land inhabited by six strong and warlike nations; and therefore they must not go as a handful of people. Thus, while the people were going through these great afflictions, groaning as if in despair, God was doing two things of the greatest moment. He was training Moses and increasing Israel in numbers. What a lesson to us in the midst of our afflictions, with all their consequent murmuring and unbelief! If God seemed to have little to do with Israel during these years of oppression, it was that he might have all the more to do with them, manifestly, in the years to come. Little did either Moses or Israel dream how

closely God would keep to them in the future. By the word of God to him here, the thoughts of Moses were brought as at one bound from the darkness of midnight to the blaze of noonday. God does not confine himself to telling Moses that he will deliver Israel. Deliverance for its own sake was as nothing; it was for the sake of what lay beyond it. He does not say that he will deliver, and wait till the time of deliverance comes, to speak of the glories and blessings of Canaan. All these things had been spoken of generations before. God was but taking, as it were, out of some muniment-room, his old plan, first shown to Abraham; unfolding it, and showing also to Moses that it still remained in all its integrity.—Y.

Vers. 10—12.—*The first difficulty: "Who am I?"* Divine promises are not long kept separated from human duty. Scarcely has God presented to Moses this welcome, almost dazzling prospect for Israel, when there breaks upon his ear an announcement of his own connection with it, and that in the most trying and responsible position. That he was to have some sort of connection with the liberation of Israel was just what he might expect. God assuredly had not chosen to visit him so far from Egypt, and in that solitary place, simply to give him the good news and leave him there. And now a duty indeed is laid upon him, the duty of duties; he who has not been near Israel for forty years is to be the chief agent in their deliverance.

I. CONSIDER THE RECEPTION WHICH MOSES GIVES TO GOD'S ANNOUNCEMENT. Observe —1. *The point on which Moses expresses no doubt.* He says no word of doubt as to the possibility of Israel being delivered from Egypt. The achievement is from the human point of view a great one, and how it is to be managed he has not yet the slightest clue, but he does not doubt that it will be managed. He might have asked, "How can a thing so great as this be done, and the thralldom of generations utterly cast off?" but he had profited already by the lesson of the burning bush, and no such question crossed his lips. For whether is easier, to preserve a bush amid the fierce flames, or to deliver a nation from bondage? The power that can do the one can do the other. 2. *The point on which he is full of doubt.* "Who am I?" etc. His mind is turned at once to his own qualifications. And what wonder? It was a great leap from being a shepherd in the wilderness to being an ambassador to a king, and a leader of men. The fact that Moses questioned his personal ability and personal worthiness is, though it may not at first appear so, a great indication of his very fitness for the post. He did not jump at the chance of distinction. He had a remembrance of his bad odour in Egypt. He had lived, too, at court, and knew how hard it is to get at kings. We can hardly call this doubt of Moses blameworthy, for he was spoken to as a sinful man, and God did not expect from him at this first opening of the interview a response such as could only come fittingly from an angel, ready at once to fly on any errand of the Almighty. A Gabriel would not have said, "who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" for angels cannot be spoken of as either humble or proud. But Moses was deeply conscious of his own faults. Indeed, if he had not been, God would not have chosen him. Men of a different sort, self-complacent and self-confident, were the last God would have looked to in such circumstances. The men he wants are such as feel keenly all natural defects—sensitive, may be, to criticism and harsh words of every kind; men, too, who for their own inclination, love the quiet and shady nooks of existence, and do not care to leave them, save under the pressure of some manifest public claim or some persistent voice of God to the tender conscience within. Such men are generally called, upon their first emergence into public, presumptuous, meddlesome, and fanatical; and they have to lay their account with these hard names. They are apt to meet with a great deal of gratuitous counsel, given on the grounds of what is called common sense. Moses well knew the difficulties that would come in his way. The one thing he had yet to learn was that God knew him far better than he did himself.

II. CONSIDER THE ENCOURAGEMENTS WHICH GOD GIVES TO MOSES. There is no word of rebuke in any way, but immediate and abundant encouragement. 1. *The emphatic assurance of God's presence and companionship.* The "I" of Moses is met by the "I" of God. Moses was to go to Pharaoh strong in the consciousness that the God who sent him was also with him. There would not be about him anything that ambassadors usually had—rich personal adornments, pomp of attendance, great profusion of presents,

distinguished earthly rank. But the absence of these things only makes more manifest the presence and dignity of the invisible God. The less of earth was seen, the more of heaven; the less of man, the more of God. If God be for us, who can be against us? If God be with us, what need we care who forsake us? Because Moses felt his own deficiencies, compared with the greatness of the work before him, God gave him this promise, and the fulfilment of it gave both needed and sufficient strength during all his conflict with Pharaoh. What about our relation to Christ's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?" The mournful truth with respect to us may be that we do not feel, either the greatness of the work before us, or our utter lack of strength to do it. We must know the burdens and the bonds, the smitings and the contumely, the sighing and the crying, of spiritual Egypt, before we can appreciate the necessity and graciousness of Christ's parting promise to his people.

2. God adds something even more noticeable than the promise of his presence. We do not say it is more important, but it is certainly more noticeable. *He makes an intimation of a very helpful token to be exhibited in the future.* Moses needed no more tokens of God's power at present; he had a sufficient token in the burning bush. If this had failed to impress him, neither could he have been persuaded by any additional wonder. But God gave to Moses a word which would keep in his mind the prospect and hope of a great sign in the time to come. What a thought to take with him through all the dismal succession of the plagues, through all the steady progress towards deliverance—that somehow or other God would bring the large host of Israel to this very mountain; to this lonely place where few people lived, because few could live! *Moses would need a token by-and-bye even more than he had needed one now.* His greatest difficulties were to be, not with Pharaoh, but with Israel; not in getting them out of Egypt, but in leading them onward to Canaan. Some difficulties doubtless he would expect, but all the stubbornness, waywardness and carnality of Israel he did not yet foresee. So the Apostle found his greatest difficulties and sorrows, not from those who stoned him at Lystra, imprisoned him at Philippi, and conspired against him at Jerusalem; but from the fornicators, the litigious, the schismatical, the deniers of the resurrection at Corinth; from the pliable yielders to Jewish bigotry in Galatia; in short, from all who, having professed to receive the truth, acted in a way incompatible with their professions; and thus we see *God keeping Moses, as it were, ahead of the people.* He was forty years ahead of them already. The creature comforts of Egypt, for which Israel lusted so in the wilderness, was no temptation to him, seeing he had become used to the wilderness. And so, when he came again to Horeb, with all this vast host in his charge, it was to rejoice in the strength that came from a fulfilled promise of God.

III. CONSIDER THE EXPECTATION FROM ISRAEL WITH WHICH GOD LOOKS FORWARD TO THE GIVING OF THIS TOKEN. Not only will God bring Israel to this mountain, but when they reach it, it will be to serve him. He says very little; only, "Ye shall serve God," but that little would be enough to set Moses thinking. And yet, with all his anticipations, they must have fallen far short of the reality. One small word from the lips of God has behind it a fulness of meaning far beyond present thoughts. We learn, by the time we come to the end of this book, that serving God meant gathering in solemn and timid awe around the smoking mount; meant for Moses himself forty days and nights of retirement with Jehovah; meant the construction of the Tabernacle with all its holy contents according to the pattern shown in the mount. What a difference in the knowledge, the obligations, and the outlook of the Israelites when they left Sinai! And if the word "service," looked at in the light of past experience, was a word of meaning so large with respect to them, is it not incumbent on us to do all we can for ourselves to fill the great terms of the Christian dispensation with the fulness of their meaning? Faith—atonement—the blood of Christ—regeneration—love—holiness—heaven; let these words represent to our minds an ever-growing, a devout and correct experience of the great body of the truth as it is in Jesus.—Y.

Vers. 13—17.—*The second difficulty: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—what is his name?* Moses feels that when he goes among his brethren, one of their first questions will be as to the name of this God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Consider—

I. HOW IT WAS THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A QUESTION WAS SUGGESTED TO HIS MIND. All the deities of the other nations had names, and doubtless the gods of Egypt were well known by name to the Israelites. Part of the glory of each nation came from the fact that it was under the protection and favour of so renowned a being as its God. The feeling of Moses in asking this question may be illustrated from the clamour of the Ephesian mob against Paul. The Ephesians felt that it was a great deal to be able to say that Diana had a special interest in them. And so it seemed to Moses a reversal of the proper order of things to go to his brethren with no more indication of the Being who had sent him, than that he had been historically connected with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses could not believe that his own people would rest contented with such a representation as this; indeed, we may very reasonably go further, and assume that he himself was anxious to know the name of this unnamed God. He was not yet filled with the light and power of the pure monotheistic conception. Certainly he had just felt what real might there was with the God of his fathers, and probably there was no shadow of doubt in his mind that this God was powerful far beyond any of the rest; but he had yet to learn that he was God alone, and that all other deities, however imposing, were nothing more than the fictions of degraded and wayward imagination. When we bear in mind that Moses was only at the beginning of his personal acquaintance with God, then we shall see that there was nothing wonderful or unreasonable, from the point of his attainments at the time, in asking such a question. Observe also that *the very question is a revelation of how ignorant the Israelites were of God*. How clear the proof is that the thought of God, as Jehovah, came down from above, and did not rise out of the corrupted hearts of men. When we have much to do with persons, it is a matter of necessity to have names for them, and if they give us none, we must make them for ourselves. But the Israelites had no transactions with God, save as he came down and pressed his presence upon them; and even then all that they could see was such power as became manifest to the senses. It is very certain that if God had not revealed this name, there was no faculty among the Israelites to invent it.

II. THE GIVING OF THE NAME. *We must bear in mind the purpose for which the name was given.* The question at once suggests itself—Would God have given this name, if he had not been asked? To this perhaps the best answer is that the difficulty out of which the question rose was sure to be felt, even if the question itself was not asked. Some name of the kind assuredly became needed for distinguishing purposes. It was a name as helpful to the people of idolatrous nations as to Israel itself. An Egyptian or a Philistine could say, "The Hebrews call their God Jehovah." What the Israelite understood by the name in itself, is, we may fairly say, a point impossible to settle. The wisdom of God is certainly evident in giving a name which, while it so well served a temporary purpose, remains still to suggest matters which no lapse of time can ever render indifferent. It is vain to discuss the form of the expression, with the aim of tying it down to mean some particular aspect of the Divine nature, to the exclusion of others. Far better is it for Christians to take it—and thus, surely, devout Israelites would take it—as suggesting all that it is fitted to suggest. There is the name; some will put into it more, and some less, but no one can pretend that he has filled it with the fullness of its import. It would be very helpful for the Israelites always to bear in mind *the occurrence of the first person* in this great distinguishing name. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is one who can say "I." He is not represented by some dumb idol, voiceless save through the traditions of those who worship it. He who says "I am" thus registers in Holy Writ an expression which will have meaning and suggestiveness in every language under heaven. What an intimation is given to us of the permanent value of the expression when we come upon it so suddenly in the discussion between Jesus and the Jews! They had spoken haughtily concerning great names in the past—the dead Abraham and the dead prophets; when straightway, as by the breath of his mouth, Jesus shrouds up the glories of all mere mundane history by his declaration, "Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.) Abraham and all the rest of us have come into existence. But Jesus is one who, even here below, with the knowledge of what happened at Bethlehem, *has* that in him whereby he can say, "I am."

III THE GIVING OF THIS NAME MADE IT NEEDFUL TO REITERATE AND EMPHASISE

THE NAME ALREADY GIVEN. There is nothing to indicate that the name for which Moses asked was to be mentioned to the Israelites unless they applied for it. The real necessity and value of it belonged to the future rather than the present. The name already given was the name of urgent importance for the present need. It could not for a moment sink into the background even before the name "I am." The one thing needful for Israel, at this time, was to get them into the past, and to bring before their minds with all possible freshness and impressiveness, the actions, the purposes and the claims of the God who had dealt with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of what avail is it to know that there is an eternal immutable God, unless we, in our mutability, in our melancholy experiences of time, are brought into helpful connection with him? We may ponder over the name Jehovah without coming to any knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but if we only begin by a devout consideration of the narrative concerning these men, then assuredly we shall come at last to a profitable and comforting knowledge of God. There are many good purposes to be served by studying the differences between created and uncreated existence, and by making ourselves acquainted with those subtle speculations concerning the Divine nature which have fascinated and too often tantalised the greatest intellects among men; and yet all these are as nothing unless from our acquaintance with them we advance, still searching and seeking, to a personal knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is well to have our minds lifted up to lofty conceptions; it is better still, coming to the Father through Christ, to have our hearts nourished, gladdened and consoled.—Y.

Vers. 18—22.—The coming liberation: God indicates the method of it. In this conversation between God and Moses, recorded in chaps. iii. and iv., we observe that God is occupied with something more than simply answering the questions of Moses. Answering these questions, he then goes on to give his own instructions besides. God's instructions to us, for right service, do not depend on our questions. These must be answered, that stumblingblocks may be taken out of the way; but when they are removed, then we must wait and listen, to find out the exact path according to the Divine will. Thus in the passage before us, God indicates to Moses the really critical part of the great enterprise. The questions of Moses show that it is in Israel, in himself and in his brethren, that Moses looks for the great difficulties. But now God would point out to him that the real struggle is to be in breaking down the proud, despotic resolution of Pharaoh. There was no occasion for Moses to doubt the concurrence of his own people. Nothing very taxing or trying is yet asked from them. "They shall hearken to thy voice." But, when they had hearkened, Moses had to go from them to a man who would not hearken, either to him or to God who had sent him. Observe—

I. THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPROACHING PHARAOH. Moses was not left to approach Pharaoh in any way that might seem best to himself. God ordered who the supplicants were to be, and what the exact petition they were to present. 1. *The supplicants.* They are Moses and the elders of Israel. There is a due, general and dignified representation of the whole people. Moses is to go, not only as the messenger of God, but undeniably as the spokesman of his enslaved brethren. God assures him that he will win the companionship and support of the older and experienced men among them. It is not to be some hot, rebellious crowd of youths that will seek to break in upon Pharaoh. A representative body, most if not all of them well up in years, and headed by a man of fourscore, are to approach him in a dignified way, respectful to him and respectful to themselves. Those who are the advocates of a righteous cause must not spoil or dishonour it by a rash, provocative and boisterous line of conduct. Pharaoh is to be made conscious that he is dealing with those who have every right and competency to speak. If he meets them in an angry, unyielding spirit, he will be left with no chance of finding excuse for himself in the spirit in which he has been approached. 2. *The petition.* The petitioners are to ask for only a small part of what is really required. The request has been called by some a deceptive one. It is wonderful how quick the worldly mind is, being so full of trickery and deceit itself, to find out deceit in God. If this had been purely the request of Israel, then it would have been deceitful, but it was emphatically God's request, and it served more purposes than one. In

the first place, the character of the boon desired indicated to Israel, and especially to these responsible men the elders, what God was expecting from them. He who had told Moses, in direct terms, concerning the service in "this mountain" (ver. 12), was now intimating to them, indirectly, but not less forcibly, something of the same kind. God has more ways than one of setting our duties before us. Secondly, the request was a very searching test of Pharaoh himself. It was a test with regard to the spirit and reality of his own religion. If to him religion was a real necessity, a real source of strength, then there was an appeal to whatever might be noble and generous in his heart not to shut out the Hebrews from such blessings as were to be procured in worshipping Jehovah their God, and the request searched Pharaoh's heart in many ways besides. God well knew beforehand what the result would be, and he chose such an introductory message as would most completely serve his own purposes. These threatened wonders were to start from plain reasons of necessity. We must constantly bear in mind the comprehensiveness of the Divine plans, the certainty with which God discerns beforehand the conduct of men. If we keep this truth before us we shall not be deceived by the shallow talk of would-be ethical purists concerning the deceptions found in Scripture. We must not argue from ourselves, wandering in a labyrinth of contingencies, to a God who is above them all.

II. GOD NOW SEEKS TO MAKE CLEAR TO MOSES THAT WHAT PHARAOH EMPHATICALLY REFUSES TO GRANT AT FIRST, HE WILL BE COMPELLED TO GRANT AT LAST. Thus God makes luminous another important point in the future. That future now stretches before Moses, like a road in the dark, with lamps fixed at certain intervals. Between the lamps there may be much darkness, but they are sufficient to indicate the direction of the path. God had lighted one lamp to assure Moses of a favourable reception by his own people; another to show the kind of treatment which would have to be adopted towards Pharaoh; a third to show the complete success of this treatment; and a fourth shining all the way from Sinai, to make plain that in due course Moses and his liberated brethren would arrive there. God was quickly adding one thing after another, to increase and assure the faith of his servant, and make him calm, courageous, and self-possessed in the prosecution of a momentous enterprise. Only let Moses be faithful in certain matters that are comparatively little, such as making a prompt return to Egypt, and then delivering his messages, first of all to Israel and afterwards to Pharaoh; and God will take care of all the rest. At the beginning Pharaoh will thunder forth a decided and apparently decisive "No!"—but in spite of all his present resolution, the end will see Israel hurried out of the land by a nation smitten with universal bereavement and terror. And, to make this point clearer still, God gives to Israel the marvellous assurance that Egypt will rush from the one extreme of pitiless extortion to the other of lavish generosity. God would secure to Israel much of its own again, even in the secondary matter of external possessions. The Egyptian wealth that had been gained by oppressing the people would be largely disgorged. They were not to go out as impoverished fugitives, but as bearing the rich spoils of God's own great battle. Thus does God invite his servant to bear in mind this mighty compelling force. Pharaoh is great and rich and strong, but God is about to do things in the midst of his land which will force him to confess that there is One far greater and far stronger than himself.—Y.

Vers. 1—6.—Forty years since, Moses (ii. 11) had "turned aside" from court life in Egypt to see how his brethren the children of Israel fared amid the furnace of trial. The old life seems like a dream, so long ago; the old language (iv. 10) grown unfamiliar. The annual routine; flocks to be driven to distant pasturage at the approach of summer. God's hour at hand just when least expected.

I. THE PROPHETIC VISION. When God calls to the prophetic office, there is usually some vision or appearance, through which the call is emphasised and its significance suggested. Cf. Is. vi. 1—7; Jer. i. 11—13; Ezek. i. 4; Matt. iii. 16 to iv. 11; Acts ix. 3—6. So here: 1. *The vision.* A dry acacia bush on fire, not very singular. What is singular is that the bush seems to flourish amidst the flame! The mystery explained, vers. 2—4. The bush is in the midst of the flame, but the angel of Jehovah is in the midst of the bush. 2. *Its significance.* Israel "a root out of a dry ground." In the furnace of affliction, yet flourishing amid the furnace (cf. i. 12). When Moses had

"turned aside to see" forty years before, he had supposed that his brethren would have recognised in him their deliverer; had not sufficiently recognised himself that it was God's angel in their midst who was really preserving them. Trouble, sorrow, persecution *may* consume and practically annihilate; whole peoples have been killed off and left hardly a trace in history. Though "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," yet there is no specially conservative power in suffering; it is only when God is with men that they can "walk through the fire and yet not be burned" (cf. Is. xliii. 2).

II. THE DIVINE REVELATION. 1. *Preliminary condition*: ver. 4. "Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see." (1) Revelations are not for the unobservant. God will give us eye-guidance if we will have it (Ps. xxxii. 8), but we must be alert to catch his glance. (2) Revelations are not for the cowardly; where *one* turned aside to see, *nine* might have turned aside in sheer terror to escape seeing. He that would hear God's voice must fight with and overcome his fears, otherwise he is likely to be classed with the unbelieving and the abominable (Rev. xxi. 7, 8). 2. *The call heard and answered*. To the man ready to receive it the call comes. God is going to reveal his own name to Moses, but calls Moses first by *his* name. The conviction that God knows us is the best preparation for learning more about him. Moses is on the alert; eager to listen, ready to obey. 3. *Reverence secured*: ver. 5. Interviews with God need preparation. Even when God calls, man cannot hear his voice aright save in the hush of utter reverence. To attain this for those who are in the body, material aids must not be despised; so long as men possess senses there must be a sensuous form for even the most spiritual worship. 4. *God declares himself*: ver. 6. Cf. Matt. xxii. 32. God in the midst of the nation, as in the midst of the bush, was preserving it *in its entirety*. Not like a bundle of green twigs, the relics of a perished stem. Stem and twigs, the ancestral stock no less than the offspring, all alike preserved—kept by him who can say, "I am their God." *Application*:—Has God ever declared himself to us? If not, whose the fault? Have we been on the outlook to catch his signs? Have we used due reverence in listening for his voice? Have we been ready to obey even the lightest indication of his will? Attention, reverence, obedience—all needed if we would hear God speak. We must be as Moses was—self stifled, the world silenced, a-hush to hear the Divine voice.—G.

Vers. 1-10.—*The Burning Bush*. "Behold the bush," etc. Ex. iii. 2. A very astonishing event; yet amply evidenced to us by those voluminous arguments which now more than ever establish the authenticity of Exodus; but in addition to this, we have here the special endorsement of the Truth Incarnate. See Mark xii. 26. [Examine this passage critically, and consider how full and valid the endorsement is! No mere acceptance of received legend.]

I. THE TIME. A solemn undertone in ver. 1. A great soul wandering under the starlight of a partial revelation. 1. *In the life of the Church*. A time of trial; Israel like leaves in autumn, like the foam of the sea, and that for long. Of deepening trial, see Ex. i. Deliverance apparently impossible. The government of the new Pharaoh now firm and strong. For evidence of depression see Ex. vi. 9. 2. *In the life of Moses*. Eighty years of age. Acts vii. 23, 30. Yet hardly any history of the man. In fact we have no continuous history. Died at 120. First forty years? Blank. So with second and third. *A history of four crises!* Birth; decision; entrance on service; death.

Learn: (1) *Crises in all lives*. Divergent roads! Crises fix what we are to be and do. Illustrate from life. Watch for them. Pass them on your knees. "Hold up my goings," etc. (2) *God determines them*. This came on Moses unexpectedly. Where? On the line of common duty. "He led the flock," etc. "So, rest in the Lord," etc. (3) *Leave life to God*.

II. THE SCENE. The following should be carefully observed, with the view of vivifying and realising this story of Divine manifestation. The scene was laid—1. *In the desert*. See Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 12-14, for the general characteristics of the desert. 2. *In the Midian section of the desert*. For exact definition of this, see "Midian," in Smith's 'Bibl. Dict.' 356a. 3. *In the Horeb range*. Horeb designates the range of mountains about Sinai; Sinai the solitary grandeur of

Jebel Músa. 'Desert of the Exodus,' p. 118. 4. *At Sinai.* Probably in Er Rahah, the wide wady north of Sinai, with the mighty pile of Rás Sufásfeh towering on the south. 5. Generally—*amid mountains*: where oft, as on the sea at night, God seems so near. His face towards the sun, Sinai in grand altitude of shade before him, Moses saw the brightness and heard the word of the Logos, the manifested God.

III. *THE VISION.* Observe here two elements:—1. *The subjective.* Moses' state of mind. This would be determined by the known circumstances of Israel, and by his own: he was away from his people, seemingly out of the covenant, the Divine promise forgotten. 2. *The objective.* A lowly plant; not a tree. Fire. No consuming; no smoke, no ashes, no waste. In the Fire (ver. 4) the Angel-God of the Old Testament. Symbol of the Church of all time. Is. xliii. 2, 3.

IV. *THE FIRST EFFECT.* Intellectual curiosity. "I will now . . . *why* the bush," etc. This attention was better than indifference, but was probably nothing more than an intelligent curiosity. Still, this was not enough.

V. *THE CHECK:* vers. 4, 5.—The attitude of the mind should be that of reverent attention, face to face with Divine manifestations. "The word of the Lord always went along with the glory of the Lord, for every Divine vision was designed for Divine revelation." This the more necessary because over every revelation there is a veil. Hab. iii. 4. Distance becomes us. "Draw not nigh hither!" So in Science, Psychology, History, the revelation of the Christ. The aim not to satisfy the curiosity, but to enlighten and empower the conscience, and direct the life.

VI. *THE DRAWING INTO COVENANTAL RELATIONS,* notwithstanding the momentary check. This by making known—1. *The Divine Name:* ver. 6. The God of thy father; of the immortal dead too; therefore thy God. The effect of this tender revelation: "Moses hid his face," etc. 2. *The Divine sympathy.* "I know." Sense of the Divine Omniscience alone is an awful pressure from above on the soul; but there is a restoration to equilibrium, by a pressure from beneath supporting, *i.e.* by a sense of Divine sympathy—"their sorrows." See Maurice, 'Patriarchs and Lawgivers,' p. 162. 3. *A Divine salvation.* "I am come down to deliver." 4. *Possibility of Divine service.* "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh:" ver. 10.—R.

Vers. 13—15.—*The proper Name of God.* "This is my name for ever," etc.—(Ex. iii. 15.) This incident of the burning bush teems with subjects susceptible of homiletic treatment. We name a few of the more important, which we ourselves do not linger to treat. 1. *THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE CHURCH:* ver. 2. 2. *THE DOCTRINE OF THE ANGEL-GOD.* Note in vers. 2—4 that "The Angel of Jehovah," "Jehovah," and "God," are one and the same. 3. *THE RESTRICTION OF JUDAISM CONTRASTED WITH THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL:* ver. 5. For valuable hints on this, see 'Moses the Lawgiver,' by Dr. Taylor of New York, pp. 46, 47. 4. *THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:* ver. 6, comp. with Matt. xxii. 31, 32. 5. *SHRINKING AT THE DIVINE CALL.* The reluctance of Moses; his four reasons— incompetence, ver. 11; ignorance of the proper name of God, ver. 13; incredulity of the people, iv. 1; want of speaking power, iv. 10—and how they were severally overcome. 6. *OUR LIFE WORK—Preparation for it and possible late discovery of it:* ver. 10. It is in connection with the second disability of Moses that the Deity gives his proper name. Note, that whilst Elohim and other names are generic, this name "Jahveh," or more commonly "Jehovah" is the distinctive *proper* name of God. See Is. xlii. 8, in Heb. As a foundation it will be useful to exhibit, in a popular way, the connection between the Hebrew form for "I am" and "Jehovah." See exegesis of vers. 14, 15 above, and also the valuable Dissertation on the Divine Name, by Russell Martineau, M.A., in Ewald's 'History of Israel,' Eng. ed. vol. ii. 433. The writer of the hymn, "The God of Abraham praise!" speaking of "Jehovah, great I Am," showed that he had perceived the etymological relation. The fundamental idea in the name is that of "Being," but around that idea plays many a prismatic light, something of which will now be exhibited. There are associated with "I am," "I am what I am," "Jahveh," the following ideas:—

1. *EXISTENCE.* How calm and solemn is this Divine affirmation in the silence of the desert, as in it God protests against being confounded with—1. *Idols.* Material or intellectual. Over against the teaching of the atheist positivist, pantheist agnostic,

polytheist, God places his "*I am*." 2. *Mere phenomena*. Who can separate always surely in nature between reality and appearance; or within the realm of mind, between certainty and illusion or delusion? But behind all phenomena is the Existence—God.

II. ETERNITY. The Existence is absolute, without any limit of time; so much so, that many are anxious to translate "*Jahveh*," or "*Jehovah*," everywhere by "*The Eternal*." See same idea of God in Rev. i. 4—8. In opening out the eternity and consequent immutability of God, we expound it, not metaphysically, but experimentally, that is, in relation to the actual experience of men, who need beyond everything the assurance of an unchanging Saviour and Father to trust, and love, and serve—"the same yesterday, to-day," etc.

III. CAUSATIVE ENERGY. "*Jahveh*," or "*Jehovah*," is from Hiphil, the causative form of the verb. Carries, then, in itself, not only the meaning "*To be*," but "*To cause to be*." The idea is not however merely, having *once for all* caused existence, but that of constantly creating. Note this mighty causative force operating—1. *In nature*, which is the momentary work of the ever-present God. 2. *In creating a people* for his praise, as now about to do in the desert of Sinai.

IV. PERSONALITY. The transcendently sublime egoism, "*I am!*" It is not necessary that we should be able to answer the question, What is a person? to know what personality is, or to be sure that there is personality in God. On this point see Wace's Boyle Lectures on "*Christianity and Morality*," p. 62, and, indeed, the whole of lecture iv. on "*The Personality of God*." "The question of immediate practical importance is, not what God's nature is, but how we may feel towards him, and how we may suppose him to feel towards us. The simple and perfectly intelligible answer given to these questions by the Jews was, that they could feel towards God in a manner similar to that in which they felt towards other beings whom they considered persons, and that he felt similarly towards them." Our true knowledge of personality is quite independent of our ability to define it in words. This meeting of the personality in Moses with the personality in God constituted for Moses a crisis in his history. So is it ever—the confronting of my spirit by the Spirit of God is the supreme moment of existence.

V. FIDELITY. The words in ver. 14 may be read: "*I shall be what I shall be*." From future to future the same; not like the gods of the heathen, fitful, capricious. What God was to the fathers, that he will be to children's children; not a promise broken or a purpose unfulfilled.

VI. COVENANTAL GRACE. Evidence that "*Jahveh*," or "*Jehovah*," is the covenantal name of God is accumulated in abundance in Smith's '*Bib. Dict.*' under word "*Jehovah*," (sect. v.) p. 957. To the many striking illustrations there, add, that Jesus is equivalent to Joshua = Jehovah that saves.

VII. MYSTERY. God we may apprehend, never comprehend; touch, as with the finger, never grasp or embrace. "*I am what I am*." Job. xi. 7—9; Ps. lxxvii. 19; Hab. iii. 4.—R.

Observe generally on the name: 1. It was then *new*: Ex. vi. 3. Not absolutely new, but practically so. 2. It became *sacred*. The Jew never pronounced it. This savoured of superstition, and its ill effect is to be seen in the suppression of the name Jehovah, even in our English Bibles, and in the substitution for it of LORD in small capitals. We will enter into their reverence without showing their superstition. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." 3. The name is a *root*-designation in the revelation of God. Assumed universally in Judaism and Christianity, see Maurice's '*Patriarchs and Lawgivers*,' pp. 165, 166. 4. The name sets forth *objective truth*. "This is my name for ever." It is the sign-manual of the Almighty across nature, in providence, on the cross. The name gives us a true idea of the Deity. 5. The name should be *subjectively cherished*. "This is my *memorial* to all generations." God's forget-me-not in the believer's heart. The name by which he would be remembered.—R.

Vers. 3—10.—I. HOW MOSES MET WITH GOD. 1. The marvel was marked and considered. He might simply have glanced at it and passed on; but he observed it till the wonder of it possessed his soul. There are marvels that proclaim God's presence in the earth to-day. Creation, the Bible, Christ's saving work. The first step towards con-

viction is to consider them. 2. "He turned aside to see." It was a matter to be inquired into and probed to the bottom. 3. God meets the earnest, sincere spirit: "When the Lord saw," etc., "God called unto him." The eunuch reading in his chariot, and Philip, etc. We cannot turn aside to consider these things with a sincere desire for light, and not meet at last with him who is Light. To all true seekers God will reveal himself.

II. WHAT FITS FOR GOD'S SERVICE. 1. We must rise from a mere seeking after God to the knowledge that we are known of God: his heart was thrilled by the cry, "Moses! Moses!" The cry proclaimed not only that God knew him, but that he was *his* God. The Lord claimed him in that cry as his servant, his son. Have we heard it? If not, we do not know God as the living God, as *our* God, and how can we serve him? 2. The sense of God's holiness and majesty, hallowing all things for us (ver. 5). The depth of our trust and our love may be measured by the depth of our adoration. 3. The vivid realisation of what God has done in the past (ver. 6). That is God's revelation of himself. The story of the past must yield strength to the present. 4. The assurance that God's purpose of redemption is behind our efforts: that we speak and labour because he *has surely* risen to redeem (vers. 7—10).—U.

Vers. 11—17.—*Hindrances to service and how God removes them.* 1. THE HINDRANCE FOUND IN THE SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS (vers. 11, 12). 1. Moses knew the pomp and pride of the Egyptian court. He remembered how Israel had rejected him when he was more than he was now. Once he had believed himself able for the task, but he was wiser now: "Who am I?" etc. He might serve God in the lowly place he held, but not there. Moses in this the type of multitudes. God's call for service is met on every hand by the cry, "Who am I that I should go?" 2. How God meets this sense of weakness. (1) By the assurance of his presence. It was not Moses only that should go, but God also. The conviction that he is with us, and that we speak for him, makes the meekest bold, the weakest strong. (2) By the assurance of success: "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain." He is armed with *faith and hope*. From self let us look to God and his pledged word.

II. THE HINDRANCE FOUND IN THE SENSE OF OUR IGNORANCE (vers. 13—17). 1. His own thought of God was dim. How then could he carry conviction to the hearts of the people? The same lack of clear, living thought of God keeps tongues tied to-day. 2. How it may be removed. (1) God is THE UNCHANGING ONE. He had revealed himself to their fathers: he was all this still. It was his memorial for ever. Grasping this thought, all the past is God's revelation. (2) He takes with him a gospel for present need (vers. 16, 17), and these two things will be God's full revelation. We must make men apprehend the revelation which God has given of himself in the past, and proclaim him as the God of to-day. "I have surely visited you . . . and I will bring you up out of the affliction."—U.

Vers. 18—22.—I. THE REMOVAL OF MOSES' FEAR. His mission will be successful. 1. He will win the people's trust for God. They will not refuse to hear. 2. Their elders will accompany him into Pharaoh's presence: his request will become the people's. 3. The Lord will lead them out laden with the spoils of Egypt. Going on God's errand there is no possibility of failure. The fears which rise as we measure the greatness of the task and our own strength vanish when we look up into the face of God.

II. OPPOSITION WILL BE MET WITH, BUT IT WILL ONLY HEIGHTEN GOD'S TRIUMPH. "I am sure that the King of Egypt will not let you go . . . and I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders." 1. We are not to expect that we shall sail over an unruffled sea, and that labour for Christ will be a continuously triumphal progress. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." 2. It is the occasion of the revealing of God's mighty power. Trial is God's school for deepening and purifying trust in himself. The triumph of Christianity in the first ages a consecration of the Church and a proof to the world of the Divine origin of our faith.

III. THE PLAN GOD FOLLOWS IN EFFECTING HIS PEOPLE'S DELIVERANCE. 1. A small demand is made: permission to go three days' journey into the wilderness. Great promises are given to the Church, but it does not now demand that the silver and the gold should be yielded for the service of God, and that the mighty should come down

from their thrones and give them to his saints. It asks only for liberty to serve God and to declare his will. 2. The world's refusal brings down God's judgments; and then comes the glory and the enrichment of the sons of God.—U.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—17.—The reluctance of Moses to undertake the part of leader, indicated by his first reply at his first calling, "Who am I that I should go?" etc. (ch. iii. 11), was not yet overcome. God had promised that he would succeed; but he did not see how he could succeed, either with the people or with Pharaoh. It was not enough for him that God had declared, "They (the people) shall hearken unto thy voice" (ib. 18); he does not, cannot believe this, and replies: "Behold, they will not believe, neither hearken unto my voice" (ch. iv. 1). This was plain want of faith; but not unnatural, and not, in God's sight, inexcusable. God therefore condescended to the human weakness of his servant, and proceeded to show him *how* he intended that he should persuade the people of his mission. He should persuade them by producing the credentials of miracles (vers. 2—9). But the laggard heart finds yet a further objection. Moses feels that he labours under a personal defect, which (he thinks) is an absolute disqualification. He is "slow of speech and of a slow tongue" (ver. 10), has always been wanting in eloquence, and does not find himself any the more eloquent since God has been speaking with him. In vain does Jehovah promise to "be with his mouth" (ver. 12); Moses' last word indicates all the old feeling of self-distrust. "Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (ver. 13). Then at last the anger of the Lord is kindled against Moses, and God inflicts on him a sort of punishment—degrades him, as it were—deposes him from the position of sole leader, and associates Aaron with him in such sort that Aaron must have appeared, both to the Israelites and to the Pharaoh, as the chief leader rather than Moses. (See ch. iv. 30; vii. 2, 10, 19; viii. 6, 17, etc.)

*At this point the interview between Moses and Jehovah ends, and the action of the Exodus commences. Moses obtains leave to quit Midian, and quits it—returns to Egypt, after escaping from a dangerous sickness on the

way (vers. 24—26), is met by Aaron and takes him into his counsels, summons the elders and exhibits before them his miraculous powers, persuades them, and is finally accepted as having, with Aaron, a mission from God, both by the elders and the people.

Ver. 1.—Behold, they will not believe. Attempts have been made to soften down this contradiction of God's words in ch. iii. 18, and to represent Moses as merely saying, "What if the people will not hearken, etc. What shall I do then?" (So the LXX., Geddes, Boothroyd, and others.) But the phrase is really emphatic and peremptory. As Rosenmüller says: "*Vox est negantis et detractantis officium.*" The Lord hath not appeared to thee. It is quite probable that the Israelites would have so spoken, if Moses had had no sign to show. There had been no appearance of Jehovah to anyone for above four hundred years. And the Israelites, who had not seen Moses for forty years, would not know whether he was a veracious person or not.

Ver. 2.—A rod. Or "a staff." Some suppose the ordinary shepherd's staff, or crook, to be meant; but it is objected that this would have been an unfit object to have brought into the presence of Pharaoh (Kalisch), being unsuitable for a court, and emblematic of an occupation which the Egyptians loathed (Gen. xli. 34); and the suggestion is therefore made, that it was the *bâton* or long stick commonly carried by Egyptians of good position and especially by persons in authority. But Moses in Midian, forty years after he quitted Egypt, is not likely to have possessed such an article: nor, if he had possessed it, would he have taken it with him when shepherding. Probably a simple staff, the natural support of a man of advanced years, is meant.

Ver. 3.—It became a serpent. The word here used for "serpent," *nakhsh*, is a generic word applicable to any species of snake. We cannot assume that the *cobra* is the serpent meant, though no doubt Moses, when he fled from before it, believed it to be a venomous serpent. Various reasons for God's choice of this particular sign have been given. Perhaps the best is, that a trick of the kind was known to the Egyptian conjurors, who would be tempted to exhibit it in order to discredit Moses, and would then be discredited themselves by his stick swallowing theirs. (See ch. vii. 10—12.) It is fanciful to suppose a reference either to the serpent of Gen. iii. (Keil and Delitzsch) or to the uræus

(cobra), which the Egyptian kings bore in their headdress as a mark of sovereignty (Canon Cook)

Ver 4.—By the tail. A snake-charmer will usually take up his serpents by the neck, so that they may not be able to bite him. Moses was bidden to show his trust in God by taking up his serpent by the tail. His courage, as well as his faith, is shown in his ready obedience. It became a rod. A veritable rod once more, not a mere stiffened snake like the "rods" of the magicians (ch. vii. 12)

Ver. 5.—That they may believe. The sign was to convince the Israelites, in the first instance, and cause them to accept the mission of Moses (see vers. 30, 31). It was afterwards to be exhibited before Pharaoh (ver. 21), to try him and prove him, but not to convince him.

Ver. 6.—Furthermore. The first sign is followed by a second, equally simple and easy of performance, and perhaps, in the eyes of the Israelites, even more marvellous. Leprosy in a developed form was regarded as absolutely incurable. (Celsus, 'De Re Medica,' v. 7-8.) Its instantaneous production and removal were contrary to all experience, and in themselves thoroughly astonishing. Further, while the first miracle was simply a sign of supernatural power—a credential, the second was a warning and a lesson. What might not he do to smite or to save on whom God had bestowed such power over the human organism? Each man would naturally fear to resist or disobey one so dangerously gifted. Leprous as snow. The Greek name for the worst form of leprosy, λεύκη, was based on this fact of whiteness. The loathsome disease is thus described by Kalisch:—"It begins with mealy crusts and scurfy scabs, originally not larger than a pin's point, a little depressed in the skin (Lev. xiii. 3, 30), and covered with white hairs (ib. 3, 20). These spots rapidly spread (ib. 8), and produce wild [proud?] flesh (ib. 10, 14). The leprosy symptoms appear most frequently on the hairy parts of the body, and also on members which have been ulcerously affected. When the leprosy has gained ground, the whole skin appears glossy white at the forehead, nose, etc., tuberculated, thickened, dry like leather, but smooth; sometimes it bursts, and ulcers become visible. The nails of the hands and feet fall; the eyelids bend backwards; the hair covers itself with a fetid rind, or goes off entirely (Lev. xiii. 42). All external senses are weakened: the eyes lose their brightness, become very sensitive, and are continually blearing; from the nostrils runs a fluid phlegm." ('Comment. on Exodus,' p. 50.)

Ver. 8.—The voice of the first sign. Some understand "the voice of Moses as he gave them the first sign;" but it is better to regard the sign itself as speaking to them. According to the sacred writers everything that can

teach us anything—day, night, the heavens, the firmament, the beasts, the fowls of the air, the fishes, nay, the very stones—have a voice. They teach us, speak to us, declare to us, cry out aloud, lift up their voice, shout, sing, proclaim God's will, whether man will hear or whether he will forbear. (See Ps. xix. 1-3; Job xii. 7, 8; Hab. ii. 11; Luke xix. 40, etc.) Equally, or rather much more, must a miracle be regarded as having a voice. God speaks to us by it.

Ver. 9.—If they will not believe also. "Even" would be a better translation than "also." The river is of course "the Nile." See the comment on ch. ii. 3. Of the three signs given, the first would probably convince all those who were religious, well-disposed, and fair-minded; the second, acting upon their fears, would move all but the desperately wicked, who despised Jehovah and put their trust in the gods of the Egyptians (Josh. xxiv. 14; Ezek. xx. 7, 8; xxiii. 3, 8, etc.). The third sign was for these last, who would regard the Nile as a great divinity, and would see in the conversion of Nile water into blood a significant indication that the God who had commissioned Moses was greater than any Egyptian one.

Ver. 10.—And Moses said, O my Lord. The phrase used by Moses is full of force. It is "vox dolentis et supplicantis" (Noldius). Joseph's brethren use it to the steward of Joseph's house, when they expect to be fallen upon and taken for bondsmen (Gen. xliii. 20); Judah used it (ib. xlv. 18) when pleading with Joseph for Benjamin; Aaron when pleading for Miriam (Num. xii. 11); Joshua when expostulating with God about Ai (Josh. vii. 8). There is a deprecatory idea in it, as well as a supplicatory one; an idea like that which Abraham expanded into the words, "Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once" (Gen. xviii. 32). Moses feels that he is trying the patience of God to the uttermost; but yet he must make one more effort to escape his mission. I am not eloquent. Literally, as in the margin, "a man of words." "Words do not come readily to my tongue when I attempt to speak; I have never been a fluent speaker, neither yesterday (i.e. recently) nor the day before (i.e. formerly). Nor do I even find that I have become eloquent by divine inspiration since thou spakest with me. Still I remain slow of speech and slow of tongue." A question is raised whether the mere difficulty of finding words and giving them utterance—a difficulty felt at first by almost every speaker—is here meant, or something further, as "a natural impediment owing to defect in the organs of speech" (Kalisch), or a want of readiness, owing to disuse, in speaking the Hebrew language (Clarke). The latter suggestion is scarcely consistent with the ease and fluency with

which Moses had carried on the conversation in Hebrew up to this point. The former is a possible meaning, though not a necessary one. According to a Jewish tradition, Moses had a difficulty in pronouncing the labials *b*, *v*, *m*, *ph*, *p*.

Vers. 11—13. — Who hath made man's mouth? God could and would have cured the defect in Moses' speech, whatever it was; could and would have added eloquence to his other gifts, if he had even at this point yielded himself up unreservedly to his guidance and heartily accepted his mission. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. He gives all powers—sight, and hearing, and speech included—to whom he will. He would have been "with Moses' mouth," removing all hesitation or indistinctness, and have "taught him what to say"—supplied the thought and the language by which to express it—if Moses would have let him. But the reply in ver. 13 shut up the Divine bounty, prevented its outpour, and left Moses the ineffective speaker which he was content to be. The words, *O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send, are curt and ungracious; much curter in the original than in our version.*¹ They contain a grudging acquiescence. But for the deprecatory particle with which they commence—the same as in ver. 10—they would be almost rude. And we see the result in the next verse.

Ver. 14.—The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. The expression used is a strong one, but does not perhaps here mean more than that God was displeased. At least, he did not punish the offender in any severer way than by the withholding of a gift that he was ready to bestow, and the partition between two of a position and a dignity which Moses might have had all to himself. Perhaps diffidence and self-distrust, even when out of place, are not altogether abhorrent to One whose creatures are continually offending him by presumption and arrogance. Is not

Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know, etc. This translation is wrong. The two clauses form one sentence, and should be rendered, "Do I not know that Aaron the Levite, thy brother, speaks well?" Aaron's designation as "the Levite" is remarkable, and seems to glance at the future consecration of his tribe to God's especial service. Behold, he cometh forth to meet thee. It has been conjectured that Aaron designed to visit Moses in Midian, in order to convey to him the intelligence that the king who had sought his life (ch. ii. 15) was dead. He did not, however, start on the journey till God gave him a special direction (ver. 27).

Ver. 15.—Thou shalt speak unto him and put words in his mouth. Moses was to tell Aaron what to say—furnish, *i.e.*, the matter of his speeches—and Aaron was to clothe this matter in fitting words. God promised to be with both of their mouths; with Moses', to make him give right directions to Aaron; with Aaron's, to make him utter them persuasively. Moses' position was still the more honourable one, though Aaron's might seem the higher to the people.

Ver. 16.—He shall be thy spokesman. Literally, "He shall speak for thee." He shall be, even he. It is the verb that is repeated, not the pronoun. Probably the meaning is, "he shall surely be." There is no comparison between Aaron and anyone else. Thou shalt be to him instead of God. Divine inspiration, that is, shall rest on thee; and it shall be his duty to accept thy words as Divine words, and to do all that thou biddest him.

Ver. 17.—Thou shalt take this rod. Not any rod, but the particular one which had already once become a serpent. Wherewith thou shalt do signs. Rather, "the signs," *i.e.* the signs which thou wilt have to do, as already declared in ch. iii. 20. It is quite gratuitous to suppose that God had already particularised them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The intent of the first sign.* Primarily, no doubt, the object was to empower Moses to show forth a sign easily, readily, without preparation, and so at any moment. He had come to the time of life at which he naturally carried a staff. That he should be able at his will to transform that dead piece of vegetable matter into an active, living organism, would show him endowed with supernatural power over both the vegetable and animal worlds, and give him a means, always ready to his hand, of demonstrating the truth of his mission. This alone was a great matter. But the fact that his rod became a serpent, rather than any other living thing, was specially calculated to impress the Egyptians. In one form, the serpent with them meant "a king," or "a crown;" and the change of a staff into a snake would typify the conversion of a shepherd into a monarch. In another form it was a sign for a "multitude," and the transformation might remind them that the single stock or stem of Jacob was now

¹ They might perhaps be best translated—"Ah! my Lord, pray send by whom thou wilt."

become "millions." The great serpent, Apap, moreover, held a high position in their mythology, as powerful to destroy and punish, whence they might the more fear one who seemed able to create serpents at his pleasure. The Israelites would perhaps view the staff as a rod to smite with, and connect its change into a serpent with the notion that when rods or whips were not thought severe enough, rulers chastised with "scorpions" (1 Kings xii. 11). Altogether, the sign, if viewed as a type, was threatening and alarming; perhaps the more so on account of its vagueness. Forms ill-defined, seen through mist, affright men more than those which are clear and definite.

Vers. 6—8.—*The intent of the second sign.* If the first sign was powerful to convince, the second was still more powerful (ver. 8). It showed Moses able to produce, and cure, in a moment of time, the most virulent malady to which human nature was liable. The Egyptians greatly feared leprosy, and declared in their own accounts of the Exodus that they drove the Israelites out of their country because they were afflicted with that loathsome disease. The Israelites regarded it as the worst affliction that could befall a man. The hand of Moses made leprous within the folds of the garment that enwrapped his bosom typified perhaps the Israelitish nation, corrupted by the circumstances that enwrapped it around in Egypt. The cure indicated that Moses would, through the power committed to him, cleanse the people from their defilements, and restore them to a state of spiritual soundness. Thus it was at once a warning and a promise. The sign appears not to have been used in Moses' dealings with the Egyptians (ch. vii. 10—17), because it was inappropriate as respected them, since they were beyond cleansing—there was no healing of their wound. Thus by this sign were taught two things: 1. That there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness which can wash away, under the condition of repentance, any defilement; and 2. That there is a state of sinfulness and corruption when repentance ceases to be possible, and the moral nature can no longer be restored, and nothing remains but that fearful looking-for of judgment to come whereof the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks (ch. x. 27). The signs of the serpent and the blood—signs of judgment—were for the Egyptians and the Israelites alike; the sign of the hand made leprous *and then restored*—a sign of mercy—was for the Israelites only.

Ver. 9.—*The intent of the third sign.*—Blood poured on the ground could symbolise nothing but war and destruction. That water should be turned into it implied that peace should be changed into war, prosperity into ruin, quiet and tranquillity into a horrible carnage. The special reference would be to the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea; but the other ruinous plagues, as especially the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth, would be glanced at also. That the water became blood on touching the ground of Egypt would indicate that it was the land and people of Egypt who were to be the sufferers. A very dreadful vengeance was thus foreshadowed by the third sign, which should have warned the Pharaoh of the terrible results that would follow his resistance to God's will as proclaimed by Moses. To the Israelites, on the contrary, the sign was one assuring them of final triumph; that the blood of their enemies would be poured out like water in the coming struggle, and their resistance to God's will be signally punished.

Ver. 10.—*Slowness of speech a drawback on ministerial fitness, but not a disqualification.* It is remarkable that both Moses, the great prophet of the First Covenant, and St. Paul, the "chosen vessel" for the publication of the Second Covenant, were ineffective as speakers; not perhaps both "in presence base," but certainly both "in speech contemptible" (2 Cor. x. 1, 10). Speakers and preachers should lay the lesson to heart, and learn not to be overproud of the gift of eloquence. A good gift it is, no doubt—when sanctified, a great gift—which may redound to God's honour and glory, and for which they should be duly thankful, but not a necessary gift. The men of action, the men that have done the greatest things, and left their mark most enduringly upon the world, have seldom been "men of words." Luther indeed was mighty in speech, and John Knox, and Whitfield, and (though less so) John Wesley, but not our own Cranmer, nor Melancthon, nor Anselm, nor Bishop Cosin, nor John Keble. In the secular sphere of statesmanship and generalship the same principle holds even more

decidedly. Demosthenes has to yield the palm to Alexander, Cicero to Caesar, Pym to Cromwell, the Abbé Siéyès to Napoleon. On the whole it must be said that those who are great in deed are rarely great in speech. And without eloquence a man may do God good service in every walk of life, even as a minister. The written sermon may go as straight to the heart of the audience as the spoken one. Ministerial effort in house-to-house visiting may do as much to convert a parish as any number of extempore sermons. Example of life preaches better than palaver. Let no one who feels within him the ministerial call, who longs to serve God by bringing his fellow-men to Christ, be deterred by the thought that he is "slow of speech and of a slow tongue." God, without making him eloquent, can "he with his mouth," give his words force, make them powerful to the conversion of souls. It has been said that there are many "dumb poets." So are there many "dumb preachers," whose weak and hesitating words God blesses and renders effectual, so that in the end they have no cause to be ashamed, but may point to those whom they have brought to Christ, and exclaim with St. Paul, "Ye are our work, ye are our epistle, the seal of our apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Cor. ix. 1, 2; 2 Cor. iii. 2).

Vers. 13, 14.—*The sin of self-distrust, and its punishment.* Undoubtedly the general inclination of men is towards self-assertion and self-sufficiency, so that diffidence and distrust of self are commonly regarded as excellences. But there is a diffidence which is wrongful, a self-distrust which Scripture condemns. St. Paul calls it "a voluntary humility" (*ἐθελοπεινοφροσύνη*)—a humblemindedness, that is, which has its root in the will; a man not choosing to think that he is fit for high things, and determining to keep down his aims, aspirations, hopes, endeavours. The same apostle exhorts his converts "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think" (Rom. xii. 3), but at the same time, by implication, not to think too humbly, for he tells them to think *soberly*, according as God has dealt to every one the measure of faith." We ought to take *true* views of ourselves, of our capacities, powers, faculties, even of the graces to which by God's mercy we have been able to attain; and not to deny them or depreciate them. If we do so we keep ourselves back from high things, and this is how God punishes us. Moses lost the gift of eloquence, which God would supernaturally have bestowed upon him (ver. 12), and lost one-half of his leadership (vers. 14—16), by his persistent diffidence and distrust. We prevent ourselves from attaining heights to which we might have attained, we keep ourselves down in this world and make our position low in the next, by similar folly. The youth who bore the banner with the word "excelsior" upon it, was wiser than most of us. If we would rise high we must aim high; if we would aim high we must not be too diffident of ourselves.

Ver. 14.—*The love of brothers.* Few things are more lovely than the affection of brothers. James and John, Simon and Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, James and Jude, were sent out together by our Lord, that they might enjoy this sweet companionship. How touching is the love of Joseph for Benjamin! If there is "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," the fact is noted for its rarity; and the force of the phrase depends on the known intensity of fraternal affection. Aaron, though so long parted from Moses, perhaps the more *because* so long parted, would at the sight of him be "glad in his heart." Though not brought up together, though educated so differently, and gifted so differently, though seemingly intended for such different walks in life, the two had a true affection, each for each, which had survived a long and—so far as we are told—complete separation. Here, and again in verse 27, it is the affection of Aaron which is especially noticed—perhaps because it was the more praiseworthy. Aaron, the elder brother, might naturally have felt some jealousy of Moses' advancement above himself, of his superior education, social position, privileges, etc. But he seems to have been entirely free from this feeling. Moses might, for aught that he knew, resume his old princely rank on his return to Egypt, and throw him once more into the shade. Aaron did not disquiet himself about this. God knew that he longed for the simple keen pleasure of *seeing* his brother ("when he seeth thee, he will be glad," etc.), of pressing him to his heart, and kissing him on the face (ver. 27). Well would it be if among Christians all brothers were thus minded.

Vers. 14—16.—*Diversities of gifts a benefit both to individuals and to the Church.*—After all, the self-distrust of Moses was turned by God to good. Without it Moses would have been sole leader of the entire enterprise, must have appeared alone before the elders and before the monarch, must have undertaken the entire charge, direction, superintendence of everything, must have had upon his mind an unshared burden which it would have been most trying to bear. God's strength might indeed have been sufficient for his weakness. But his life could not but have been a weariness to him. He would have lacked the unspeakable solace and comfort of a loved and loving associate, to whom he might open—indeed, was bound to open (ver. 15)—all his mind, and with whom he could constantly “take sweet counsel together.” He would have also lacked the support, so much needed by a shy man, of a companion and coadjutor in crises and times of difficulty, as when he appeared first before the elders (vers. 29, 30), and when he appeared first before Pharaoh (ch. v. 1). Thus the association of Aaron with himself in the leadership must have been felt by Moses as a benefit. And to Aaron it was an unmixed advantage. The gift with which God had endowed him, and which he had no doubt sedulously cultivated, caused him to be placed almost on a par with his brother—enabled him to be of use to him—gave him loving companionship—and caused him to have a large part in the deliverance of his nation. After forty years of separation, during which he had never ceased to long for the return of his brother, Aaron found himself associated in the closest possible way with Moses, made his “right-hand man,” his other self, his constant aider and assister. After a wholly undistinguished life, which had lasted eighty-three years (ch. vii. 7), he found himself brought into a position of the highest dignity and responsibility. And the Church was benefited greatly by the double leadership. Moses, the man of thought, was able to devote himself exclusively to thinking out all the details of the great work entrusted to him. Aaron, the man of words, was able to give all his attention to the framing of addresses whereby he might advance the plans of his brother. So in the Christian Church there have always been, and will always be, “diversities of gifts.” At one time they are “gifts of healing, tongues, prophecy, interpretation, discerning of spirits, faith, wisdom, prudence” (1 Cor. xii. 8—10); at another, preaching power, administrative energy, learning, scholarship, influence, and the like. Seldom are even two of these gifts united in the same individual. The Church prospers by utilising the gifts of all, assigning to each man the position suited to him, and taking care that he has a fair field for the employment of his special gift. In this way, “the whole building fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. iv. 16).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Unbelief.* The objection started by Moses to the mission on which he was sent was a very natural one. The people would not believe him, nor hearken to his voice. For—

I. HE WAS AS YET UNFURNISHED WITH DISTINCT CREDENTIALS. In so grave a matter Moses could not expect the people to believe his bare word. This was a real difficulty. Before committing themselves to his proposals, the Hebrews would be entitled to ask for very distinct proofs that the message brought to them had really come from God—that there was no mistake, no deception. God acknowledges the justice of this plea, by furnishing Moses with the credentials that he needed. From which we gather that it is no part of the business of a preacher of the Gospel to run down “evidences.” Evidences are both required and forthcoming. God asks no man to confide in a message as of Divine authority, without furnishing him with sufficient grounds for believing that this character really belongs to it. The reality of revelation, the supernatural mission of Christ, the inspiration of prophets and apostles, the authority of Scripture, all admit of proof; and it is the duty of the preacher to keep this fact in view, and in delivering his message, to exhibit along with the message the evidences of its Divine original.

II. MORAL CAUSES, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM MERE DEFICIENCY OF EVIDENCE, WOULD

MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO SECURE CREDENCE. Moses anticipated being met, not simply with hesitation and suspense of judgment, which would be all that the mere absence of credentials would warrant, but by positive disbelief. "The Lord hath not appeared to thee." How account for this? 1. *The message he had to bring was a very wonderful one.* He had to ask the people to believe that, after centuries of silence, God, the God of the patriarchs, had again appeared to him, and had spoken with him. This in itself was not incredible, but it would assume an incredible aspect to those whose faith in a living God had become shadowy and uninfluential—who had learned to look on such appearances as connected, not with the present, but with a distant and already faded past. Credulous enough in some things, they would be incredulous as to this; just as a believer in witchcraft or fairies might be the hardest to convince of a case of the supernatural aside from the lines of his ordinary thinking and beliefs. It is a similar difficulty which the preacher of the Gospel has to encounter in the indisposition of the natural mind to believe in anything outside of, or beyond, the sphere in which it ordinarily works and judges,—the sphere of things sensible (John xiv. 17). The supernatural is strange to it. It pushes it aside as inherently incredible, or at least as of no interest to it. From this the advance is easy to that which is so peculiarly a characteristic of our age, the denial of the supernatural as such—the flat assertion that miracle is impossible. 2. *The announcement contained in his message was so good as almost to surpass belief.* Great good news has often this effect of producing incredulity. Cf. Gen. xlv. 26,—“Jacob’s heart fainted, and he believed them not,” and Ps. cxxvi. And would not the Hebrews require evidence for the great good news that God had visited them, and was about to bring them out of Egypt, and plant them in Caanan! In like manner, is it not vastly wonderful, almost passing belief, that God should have done for man all that the Gospel declares him to have done! Sending his Son, making atonement for sin, etc. 3. *The difficulties in the way of the execution of the purpose seemed insuperable.* Even with God on their side, it might seem to the Israelites as if the chances of their deliverance from Pharaoh were very small. True, God was omnipotent; but we know little if we have not learned how much easier it is to believe in God’s power in the abstract, than to realise that this power is able to cope successfully with the actual difficulties of our position. The tendency of unbelief is to “limit the Holy One of Israel” (Ps. lxxviii. 41). And this tendency is nowhere more manifest than in the difficulty men feel in believing that the Gospel of the Cross is indeed the very “power of God unto salvation”—able to cope with and overcome the moral evil of the world, and of their own hearts. 4. *One difficulty Moses would not have to contend with, viz.: aversion to his message in itself.* For, after all, the message brought to the Israelites was in the line of their own fondest wishes—a fact which ought, if anything could, powerfully to have recommended it. How different with the Gospel, which, with its spiritual salvation, rouses in arms against itself every propensity of a heart at enmity against God! The Israelites must at least have *desired* that Moses’ message would turn out to be true; but not so the mass of the hearers of the Gospel. They desire neither God nor his ways; have no taste for his salvation; are only eager to find excuses for getting rid of the unwelcome truths. To overcome an obstacle of this kind, more is needed than outward credentials—even an effectual working of the Holy Ghost.

III. INFERENCES FROM THESE CONSIDERATIONS. 1. *Preachers of the Gospel must prepare themselves for encountering unbelief.* It is the old complaint—“Who hath believed our report?” (Is. liii. 1). 2. *The success of Moses in overcoming the people’s unbelief shows that he must have possessed decisive credentials of his mission.* The complaint of this verse does not tally with what is sometimes alleged as to the unlimited drafts that may be made on human credulity. Moses did not find the people all readiness to believe him. He was bringing them a message in the line of their dearest wishes, yet he anticipated nothing but incredulity. He had never much reason to complain of the over-credulity of the Israelites; his complaint was usually of their unbelief. Even after signs and wonders had been wrought, he had a constant battle to fight with their unbelieving tendencies. How then, unless his credentials had been of the clearest and most decisive kind, could he possibly have succeeded? For, mark—(1) It was not merely a few enthusiasts he had to carry with him, but the whole body of the people. (2) He was no demagogue, but a man of slow, diffident, self-distrustful nature, the last man who might be expected to play successfully on popular credulity

or enthusiasm. (3) His plans were not to be laid before the multitude at all, but before the "elders"—the cool, cautious heads of the nation, who would be sure to ask him for very distinct credentials before committing themselves to a contest with Pharaoh. The inference is that there must have been a true supernatural in the founding of the Mosaic era; as afterwards there must have been a true supernatural in the founding of the Christian era. Imposture, credulity, the force of mere ideas, the commanding power of a great personality, are, together or apart, incapable of explaining all the facts. Wonders must have been wrought, alike in the accrediting of the mission of Moses and in the stupendous work of the deliverance itself.—J. O.

Vers. 1—10.—*A trilogy of signs.* In reply to his complaint that the people would not believe him, nor hearken to his voice, God gave Moses three signs. These are to be viewed—

I. AS ATTESTATIONS OF HIS DIVINE COMMISSION (ver. 5, 8). Divine power is supernaturally exercised in proof of Moses' title to speak with Divine authority. This is a clear case of the use of miracles as credentials of a mission, and confutes those who reason that this view of miracles has no basis in Scripture. The character of the signs was not to be disregarded, but the immediate circumstance which gave them evidential value ~~was~~ the fact of supernatural origin. Practically, signs of the kind wrought by Moses would be felt to be incontestable proofs of his Divine commission; and it is difficult to see how otherwise his message could have been authenticated. Why should this be objected to? Why, if the message is worthy of God, and the work of power is also worthy of God, should the work of power not be employed to add authority to the word, as indicating with certainty the source from which it comes?

II. AS SIGNIFICANT OR PARABOLIC ACTS. This is implied in their character as "signs." They had had of themselves a "voice." They told over again what Moses had explained in words, while they exhibited in symbol the superiority of Jehovah to the king and gods of Egypt. 1. *Sign 1st.—The impotence of Pharaoh against Jehovah's messenger.* This seems to be the import of the turning of the rod into the serpent (vers. 2—5). The serpent "was the symbol of the royal and divine power on the diadem of every Pharaoh." (1) The rod cast to the ground and changing into a serpent symbolised the effect of the challenge to Pharaoh. (2) Before this terrible apparition, with its gleaming eyes, inflated neck, hissing tongue, and vehemence of assault, Moses fled in natural terror. (3) But he is instructed not to fear it, but to seize it by the tail; when there is given a representation of Pharaoh's absolute powerlessness to hurt him in the reconversion of the serpent into the rod. The foe vanishes, and Moses remains master of the situation. The lesson is, that God's servants, charged with the execution of his mission, are more than a match for all the powers of ill that can be arrayed against them. God will bruise even Satan—"that old serpent"—under their feet shortly (Rom. xvi. 20). They wield an authority which gives them for the time a charmed existence, and ensures the defeat of those opposed to them. Cf. with this sign Mark xvi. 18; Acts xxviii. 5; Rev. xii. 6; and instance Luther before the Diet of Worms. 2. *Sign 2nd.—The power of Jehovah to smite and heal.* The symbol of this was at the same time an instance of it—viz. the sudden smiting of Moses' hand with leprosy, followed by as instantaneous a cure (vers. 6—8). Leprosy was peculiarly the theocratic punishment (Miriam, Uzziah, Gehazi). It was probably a common disease among the Israelites, who figure in Egyptian traditions as a nation of lepers, hateful to the gods on account of their pollutions. The obvious teaching of this sign would therefore be—(1) That Jehovah was able to smite with the most grievous plagues, yet (2) As able to heal when he had smitten. This conveyed both threat and promise. (1) If the people obeyed his voice, as he had healed the leprous hand, so would he heal them of their natural and spiritual disorders, and lift them out of their despised and unclean state in Egypt; while conversely, (2) If they resisted, great and sore strokes of the Divine anger would fall upon them; or, if Egypt resisted God's will, it in turn would be smitten by his plagues. The power in both cases was omnipotent and resistless. Thus we are instructed—1. To fear the stroke of the Divine anger. 2. That God who smites can also heal (Hos. vi. 1). 3. That God is more willing to remove judgments than to send them. 4. That God can heal the leprous heart. 5. To fear, above all, that most awful fulfilment of the leprosy symbol

—the adjudging of the soul, under Divine wrath, to the unchecked spread of its own corruptions—to the reign of sin within itself. *Sign 3rd.*—*The ruin that would descend on Egypt if God's will continued to be disobeyed.* The sign of the turning of a portion of the water of the Nile—the source of Egypt's beauty, fertility, and prosperity—into blood (ver. 9) could only have one meaning. It portended ruin to the state of Egypt. And such would be the inevitable consequence of a contest between Pharaoh and Jehovah, if protracted by the king's obstinacy. In this case there was no reversal of the sign. The end of strife with God is judgment without mercy—utter destruction. Lesson—the folly of striving with the Almighty.

III. AS A SERIES OF SIGNS ADAPTED TO REMOVE DOUBT AT DIFFERENT STAGES (vers. 8, 9). Though, strictly speaking, one sign was enough to attest the Divine commission of him who wrought it, yet God, who condescends to man's infirmity, added sign to sign, thus furnishing a superabundance and accumulation of evidences, and rendering unbelief wholly inexcusable. It has often been observed that the strength of the evidence for revelation lies, not in any single line of proof, but in the cumulative force of a great variety of evidences, some of which strike one class of minds as of peculiar cogency, while minds differently constituted are more impressed by others. In the case before us, a certain progression may be noted; each sign, by peculiar marks, carrying us a step further than its predecessor. 1. In the turning of the rod into the serpent, we have a work of Divine power, but not without a certain resemblance to the feats of the native serpent-charmers. The points of contrast were great, but it might be doubted whether the acts of the magicians were not competent to produce as great a wonder. 2. In the second sign—the stroke of leprosy—this doubt is eliminated, and the presence of Divine power conclusively demonstrated. But Egypt had her gods also, and the question, as it would present itself to those who believed in them, was not simply, Is Jehovah powerful? but, Is his power greater than theirs? 3. The last sign gives the final proof, by working a miracle on the water of the Nile—itsself one of Egypt's greatest gods. The turning of that sacred water into blood was the death-blow to all hope of help from the Egyptian idols. Observe—1. The anxiety of God to remove doubt. 2. The ample provision he has made for its removal. 3. The patience with which he bears with man's dulness and slowness of heart. 4. The inexcusableness of unbelief.—J. O.

Vers. 10—17.—*Slow of speech.* The longer Moses pondered the mission on which he was sent, the more he shrank from it. The difficulty which now oppressed him was his want of eloquence. It seemed to him that in this respect he was the least qualified person God could have chosen. There was needed for such a work a man of persuasive tongue, of fluent, forcible, and impressive speech; and his own utterance was hesitating and heavy. Overwhelmed with the sense of unfitness, he again appeals to God, and asks to be relieved from duty. We have here—

I. A FELT INFIRMITY. Moses was doubtless right in what he said of his natural difficulty of speech. But his error lay—1. *In exaggerating the value of a gift of mere eloquence.* He did not possess it—though Stephen calls him “mighty in words” (Acts vii. 22)—and he was apt to overrate its influence. He forgot that the man of deep silent nature has a power of his own, which expresses itself through the very ruggedness and concentration of his speech; and that oratory, while valuable for some purposes, is not the most essential gift in carrying through movements which are to leave a permanent impress on history. What is chiefly wanted is not power of speech, but power of action; and when it is felt that a man can act, a very limited amount of speech will serve his purpose (Cromwell, William the Silent, Bismarck, etc.). The smooth persuasive tongue, though pleasant to listen to, is not the weightiest in counsel. 2. *In forgetting that God knew of this infirmity when he called him to the work.* God knew all about his slowness of speech, and yet had sent him on this mission. Did not this carry with it the promise that whatever help he needed would be graciously vouchsafed? God has a purpose in sometimes calling to his service men who seem destitute of the gifts—the outward gifts—needful for his work. 1. The work is more conspicuously his own. 2. His power is glorified in man's weakness. 3. The infirmity is often of advantage to the servant himself—keeping him humble, driving him to prayer, teaching him to rely on Divine grace, rousing him to effort, etc.

(2 Cor. xii. 7—10). Paul was a man "rude in speech" (2 Cor. xi. 6), and came not with eloquence of words (1 Cor. ii. 1); but his defects of speech only made the Divine power which resided in his utterances the more conspicuous (2 Cor. ii. 4, 5).

II. A GRACIOUS PROMISE. God would be with his mouth, and teach him what to say (ver. 11). The Maker of speech, he might be trusted to aid its powers, when these were needed in his service. So Christ promises his disciples to give them in their hour of need what they shall speak (Matt. x. 19). Lips touched by Divine grace possess a simple, natural eloquence of their own, far excelling the attempts of studied oratory. Then there is the other fact, that gifts of speech are often latent till grace comes to evoke them. Moses' original awkwardness was no index to what, assisted by God's grace, he might ultimately have become, even as a speaker. His gift would probably have grown with the necessity. The greatest preachers of the Gospel, with Paul at their head, have not been men naturally eloquent. If they became so afterwards, it was grace that made them. Thus, we are told of Luther that at first he dared not enter the pulpit. "Luther, who subsequently preached with so much power,—who gave a new direction, and a force and elevation never before attained, to the whole system of German preaching,—who is still the unparalleled master of all who hope to effect more by the internal demonstrativeness of a discourse than by its external ornamentation,—this Luther was too humble, too modest, to take the place of a preacher. It was only at the solicitation of Slaupitz that he finally consented to preach—at first in the oratory of the convent, and afterwards in church" (Hagenbach). Knox was equally diffident about the exercise of his gifts, and when an unexpected appeal was made to him, at the age of forty-two—"the said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber" (Knox's 'History'). All may not be eloquent like these; but anyone possessed of earnest feeling and intense convictions, who is content to deliver a plain message with directness and simplicity, will be surprised at what God can sometimes make even of rude and unskilled lips.

III. A SINFUL SHRINKING FROM DUTY (ver. 13). The continued reluctance of Moses, after so gracious an assurance, was not to be excused. It was a direct act of disobedience, and argued, besides a want of faith, a certain measure of stubbornness. God was angry with him, yet forbore with his infirmity. And, if God forbore with Moses, it is surely not for us to blame him, who are so often in "the same condemnation." Let him who has never shrunk from unwelcome duties, or who has never stumbled in believing that Divine grace will, under trying circumstances, be made sufficient for his needs, cast the first stone. Admire rather in this incident—1. The patience and forbearance of God in stooping to his servant's weakness, and 2. The "exceeding greatness" of the power which accomplished such mighty results by so unwilling an instrumentality. Nothing proves more clearly that the work of Israel's deliverance was not of man, but of God, than this almost stubborn reluctance of Moses to have anything to do with it.

IV. A SECOND-BEST ARRANGEMENT (vers. 14—17). The appointment of Aaron as spokesman to his brother, while in one view of it an act of condescension, and a removal of Moses' difficulty, was in another aspect of it a punishment of his disobedience. It took from Moses the privilege of speaking for God in his own person, and committed the delivery of the message to more eloquent, perhaps, but also to less sanctified, lips. 1. *The arrangement had its advantages* (1) It supplied one's defect by another's gift. (2) It utilised a talent lying unemployed. (3) It gave Aaron a share in the honour of being God's messenger. (4) It formed a new link of sympathy between the brothers. But—2. *It was not the best.* (1) It prevented the development of the gift of speech in Moses himself. Had he relied on God's promise, he would doubtless have acquired a power of speech to which he was at first a stranger. (2) The message would lose in force by being delivered through an intermediary. This of necessity. How much of the power of speech lies in its being a direct emanation from the mind and heart of the speaker—something instinct with his own personality! As delivered by Aaron, the messages of God would lose much of their impressiveness. Fluency has its disadvantages. A mind burdened with its message, and struggling with words to give it utterance, conveys a greater impression of force than ready delivery charged with a message that is not its own. (3) Moses would be hampered in his work by the constancy of

his dependence on Aaron. It limits a man, when he cannot act without continually calling in another to his assistance. (4) It divided Moses' authority, and gave Aaron an undue influence with the people (cf. Ex. xxxii.). (5) It was a temptation to Aaron himself to assume, or at least aspire to, greater authority than of right belonged to him (cf. Num. xii.). Learn—1. That it is not always good for us to have our wishes granted. 2. That God sometimes punishes by granting us our wishes (cf. Hos. xiii. 11). 3. That God's way is ever the best.—J. O.

Ver. 11.—God the Giver of our faculties. See—1. His power in the creation of them. "Who hath made," etc. Wisdom also. Eyes, ears, organs of speech—miracles of contrivance. 2. His goodness in the bestowal of them. A reason for thankfulness. 3. His providence in the deprivation of them. "Who maketh the dumb, or deaf," etc. A reason for not murmuring. 4. His perfection as mirrored in their functions. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Ps. xciv. 9). An answer to the objection against positive revelation. He that formed the mouth, shall he not speak? And he that formed the ear, can he not address to it his own message? 5. Lesson—His ability to aid us in using them for his glory (ver. 12).—J. O.

Ver. 13.—A servant's difficulties. Observe—

I. WHAT THEY WERE. Moses' difficulties resolved themselves into three. 1. *The power of Pharaoh.* "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (ch. iii. 10). We may be staggered by the thought of the powers that are arrayed against us. 2. *The anticipated unbelief of the people* (ver. 1). The preacher has to encounter hard and unbelieving hearts, and this may enfeeble and dishearten him. 3. *His lack of gifts* (ver. 10). Humble natures are easily discouraged by the sense of their own shortcomings—by the consciousness of ignorance, defective education, lack of gifts of speech, etc.

II. HOW THEY WERE MET. 1. God armed Moses with powers that made him more than a match for the mighty king of Egypt. 2. He gave him the means of overcoming the unbelief of the people. 3. He promised to endow him with power of speech; and, when that was rejected, supplied his defect by giving him a coadjutor. From which learn:—1. That while it is right to state our difficulties to God—to pour out all our hearts before him—it is wrong to make them an excuse for shrinking from duty. 2. That God, if relied on, will give us all sufficiency.—J. O.

Ver. 17.—The rod. The rod a fit emblem of "the word of the truth of the Gospel." 1. The rod was something definite. "This rod." Not any rod, but the one which God gives us. 2. The rod was perhaps the instrument of a despised calling. So is the preaching of the Cross "foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 21—25). 3. The rod was to be grasped and used: "in thine hand." Study, preach, expound, apply. 4. By the rod, Moses was to do signs: "wherewith thou shalt do signs." Spiritual miracles wrought by the preaching of the word. 5. The rod was efficient only as accompanied by Divine power (1 Cor. ii. 4).—J. O.

Vers. 1—9.—The third difficulty: how is Moses to deal with an incredulous Israel? With the mention of this third difficulty, we begin to see how much of doubt, self-distrust, and reluctance disturbed the mind of Moses. And no wonder. This revelation and commandment of God had come very suddenly upon him; and though strong assurances and sufficient information were readily given, yet he could not all at once receive the comforts which flowed from them. Had he attended to what God said by way of removing the difficulties already expressed he would never have given utterance to this third one. His perseverance in suggesting obstacles almost makes us feel that he hoped somehow to get out of the mission. But God meets him at every point. There is no weak place in the Divine plans. Even a matter which seems so uncertain as the reception of Moses by Israel is confidently taken altogether out of the region of uncertainties. God had already said (ch. iii. 18), "They shall hearken to thy voice," and if Moses had only waited, he would have been made to see how that hearkening would be brought about. The suggestion of this difficulty, therefore, showed how much

he was still lacking in calm faith; nevertheless we must bear in mind that the difficulty was a real one. There was only too much reason to apprehend that Israel would receive him in the way he indicated. Consider—

I. THE POOR EXPECTATIONS MOSES HAD OF A FAVOURABLE RECEPTION FROM ISRAEL. Why should he have these gloomy anticipations? Was the cause of them to be looked for wholly in Israel or wholly in himself? Did he mean to blame his brethren for their unbelief, or did he thus take another way of indicating his own utter distrust of himself? As he expresses no blame of Israel it is not for us to assume that he intended it. He knew very well that to go to his brethren with such a story, would be the very way to make them reject him and laugh him to scorn. He could not but feel that if he had been in their position, he would probably have behaved in the same way. What could it appear but presumptuous to return after forty years' absence from the distant and half-barbarous Midian, and pretend that he had been chosen to deliver Israel—he, a mere weather-beaten shepherd? Truth is stranger than fiction, and for this very reason it is too often believed to be the most improbable of all fictions. Moses thus had every ground to expect that he would be treated either as insane or as the most impudent of impostors. He would have been more easily believed in telling some made-up story than when he told the simple truth. God had looked very kindly and favourably on Moses in all his deeply felt unworthiness; but the very things that commended him to God, hindered him with men. In what a humiliating aspect this word of Moses puts our fallen human nature! When the truth in which we are most of all concerned comes before us, we are tempted to neglect and repudiate it because the messenger does not look sufficiently dignified. Nor is unbelief our only danger. We must labour to have a state of mind in which we shall always not only receive the true but reject the false. We have to do with false apostles as well as true ones. The elders of Israel would have done very wrong if they had rushed into a welcome of Moses on his bare *ipse dixit*. We must not, in our anxiety to avoid unbelief, deliver ourselves over to credulity. If the world has in it only too many of the unbelieving spirit, so, alas! it has only too many of the deceiving spirit; all the more deceivers because thoroughly deceived themselves. We must try the spirits whether they be of God, and ever live in thankful use of the infallible tests which God has given us.

II. GOD GIVES TO MOSES AMPLE EVIDENCES TO PRODUCE FAITH IN ISRAEL. Observe that God does not simply promise these signs. He works them at once, at least the two that were possible, before the very eyes of Moses. Moses has faith enough to be sure that it is indeed God who is with him at the present hour; but what about the future? True, God had said, "Certainly I will be with thee" (ch. iii. 12), and he might have repeated these words rebukingly. But he remembered that Moses was as yet very ignorant of the fulness of the Divine nature; and he acted with all his own wisdom and tenderness, to cherish the real but as yet very feeble and struggling faith of his servant. When Moses comes into the presence of his brethren, it is to cast down a rod that has already been a serpent, and to stretch forth a hand that has already been snow-white with leprosy. "What is that in thine hand?"—as much as to say, "Take note of it, look at it well, make sure that it is the rough, easily replaced instrument of your daily work." Moses is to be taught that things are not what they seem. He who according to his good pleasure took some of the original matter of the universe, and from it made the rod-nature, and from other made the serpent-nature, now by the same power changes in a moment the dead rod into the living serpent, and the living serpent into the dead rod. The healthy hand is all at once infected with leprosy, and even while Moses is shuddering with the terrible experience, the leprosy is as suddenly taken away. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. As to the significance of these miracles, there is doubtless much that lies beyond our power to ascertain. Assuredly they had in them perfect propriety both as to their order and their nature. What the burning bush became to Moses, these three miracles might become to the Israelites; not only paving the way for Moses to act with full authority in their name, but giving many lessons to such as had eyes to see and hearts to understand. For instance how could they but perceive that when God began his dealings with Pharaoh, he began with two out of the three miracles which Moses had shown to them. Moses turned the rod into a serpent, and the water into blood before Israel, and Israel believed (vers. 28—31). He did the same things before Pharaoh, and he remained

unmoved. Who can tell what terrible things Israel escaped by their timely acceptance of the mission of Moses? and yet that acceptance, as we discover by the rebellions in the wilderness, did not amount to very much. The belief that is produced by miracle, if there be not some more penetrating force behind the mere exhibition of the extraordinary, does not go very deep, nor does it last very long. The greatest benefit of these miracles was to such Israelites as could see in them, not only the power of God, but something of the purposes for which that power was used. Pharaoh caused great pain to Israel, but he did nothing else; he sought no blessed end for the people beyond the pain. God, on the other hand, though he turned a rod into a threatening serpent, and a clean and healthy hand into a leprous, loathsome mass, yet very speedily took these signs of destruction away. When God brings threatening and affliction very near to us, it is only to show how quickly and completely they may be removed. All untoward things are in his hands—all serpents, all diseases, all degrading transformations of what is good and beautiful.—Y.

Vers. 10—12.—*The fourth difficulty: Moses alleges defect of utterance.* The third time is often represented in Scripture as the final and decisive time (1 Sam. iii. 8; Matt. xxvi. 44, 45, 75; John xxi. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 8). But Moses is not yet either satisfied or even silenced. As fast as one difficulty is swept away, his fearful and fertile mind has another ready to take its place. He began with himself, in stating his objections and difficulties, pleading then his unworthiness in general terms; now in the end he comes back to himself with the mention of a special difficulty. Consider—

I. THE DIFFICULTY AS STATED BY MOSES. In the course of the conversation, God has laid before him such particulars of the work required as seem to show him, in his hasty view of them, that he will have much speaking to do. But for speaking he alleges himself to be peculiarly unfit. What he meant by this unfitness we have no means of exactly ascertaining. Perhaps he had some actual defect in the vocal organs; or it may have been nothing more than the well-nigh insurmountable difficulty which some men feel when called on to speak in public. In any case he was bringing the difficulty forward under mistaken views as to the importance of mere utterance. 1. *He was exaggerating the service of natural faculties.* To say that these are nothing at all would be of course the language of mock humility. God has shown often in the history of his work in the world that he welcomes great natural gifts, lovingly devoted to him and thoroughly sanctified. But the great temptation undoubtedly is, to make too much of natural gifts—too much of the intellect, the voice, the physical presence altogether, and too little of the purposes for which these instruments are to be used. How a thing is said is of much less moment than the thing itself. Better to stammer out a great truth than to deck lying, deception, and worldly vanities in the best-chosen words. When the Jews conspiring against Paul wanted some one to plead their cause before Felix, they sought, very wisely from their point of view, for the practised professional orator. It mattered nothing that he lacked the love of truth and justice. It was his business to do the best he could for even the worst of causes. God might easily have found elsewhere in Israel a thousand fluent and attractive speakers, more pleasant to the ear than Moses, and yet none of them sufficiently endowed, in other ways, for the great work required. 2. *He was underrating the power of God working through those whom he chooses for himself.* It is inevitable that if we exaggerate in one direction, we shall underrate in another. If we make too much of the work of man, we shall make too little of the work of God. Moses is not yet duly impressed with the fact that God has unmistakably and finally chosen him. He thinks he ought to be able to see clearly why he is chosen, and this is just what he cannot as yet get even a glimpse of. If only he had been able to feel conscious of some improvement in his natural faculties, it would have been a great encouragement, a great help to submission and prompt advance, at least so he thought. Depend upon it, we can never think of the power of God too highly. Nothing, so long as it is agreeable to his character, is beyond him. If he has chosen us for any work, he will always make his choice quite certain to our hearts; though, at the same time, to humble and try us, he may give much to perplex our intellects. In such moments our true and sufficient refuge is to remember the unfailing power of him who directs us. If Moses had only lived, say in the time of Paul, and been able to look back as Paul looked on all the Divine dealings recorded in the Scriptures, he would have seen at once,

and gloried in the fact, that his very lack of fluent speech, so far from being against him, was rather in his favour (2 Cor. iv. 7).

II. GOD'S TREATMENT OF THIS PERSEVERING RELUCTANCE. Observe God's continued patience. So far there has not been a word of rebuke to Moses; no action such as corresponds with the smiting of a stupid or inattentive scholar. But it was really quite time for Moses to begin to reflect a little before he spoke. Moses seemed to hint in this latest appeal that it was desirable at once to confer on him what he judged to be the requisite powers of speech. But God saw that the real want was not speaking, but thinking; quiet, earnest, introspective thinking. There had been quite enough of speaking unadvisedly with the lips, only to be excused by the fact that Moses had become so recently acquainted with Jehovah. Now God gives his servant something to think about. Moses has said in effect, "Here am I, called to a great work, for which, through no fault of my own, I lack the necessary faculties." And God in return is not slow to meet Moses with a plain admission of the Divine responsibility for many things which *we* count defects in human nature. "Where," says the sceptic, "is the wisdom of that God who allows the world to abound in so many human beings deficient in one or another of their natural faculties?" God meets the charge himself, and meets it boldly. He not only allows man to be so, but he makes him so; in other words, what we call defects are not defects at all. The defect is in us, who are not able to look at them in a right and comprehensive way. There are defects and defects. Man, thinking of the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, begins to wail what an imperfect thing creation is; yet he is only complaining of spots on the surface. Our outward senses, with all the knowledge and pleasure that they bring, are only subsidiary parts of humanity. Let Moses consider, and he will see that, inasmuch as these defects come from no fault of his own, God can easily make them up. The fact that Moses was so slow of heart to believe all that God had spoken was a far greater hindrance than all his slowness of speech. We find serious defects and hindrances where, so to speak, God rather finds helps; while the things that hinder God's work and stir his indignation it takes a great deal to make us conscious of. The worst obstacles to be encountered by Moses did not come from any of the things he had laid such emphasis on; they lay in his own heart—that heart into which the dawning of God's presence had only just begun to penetrate.—Y.

Vers. 13—16.—*Moses, taking a step too far, is suddenly arrested.* In ver. 13 we must evidently look at the spirit of the words, rather than the words themselves. There is nothing wrong in the words. Uttered in a different tone and in different circumstances they might have drawn forth the approval of God rather than his anger. They might be used as expressing the most devout submissiveness, the consciousness of one who, though he is treading forth into darkness and danger, is sure that he is filled with the fulness of God. But not so had Moses yet learned to speak. God has tried to call him away from the turmoil of his doubts, from his hasty conjectures and crude anticipations; but instead of obeying, instead of acquainting himself with God, and thereby being at peace, he flies in his face with this half-despairing half-defiant cry. It is the crisis of the struggle, and it is very instructive to notice how firmly and yet gently God deals with his servant. Observe, then, how we have here a *due mingling of righteous anger and compassionate aid*.

I. GOD'S MANIFESTED ANGER WITH MOSES. The expression is a strong and suggestive one. Not simply that God was angry, but that his anger was kindled. We may take it as meaning that there was some anger already, growing indeed hotter and hotter, but only now under this great provocation breaking into flame. The anger of God must inevitably rise at every contact with human ignorance and stubbornness, though it may be so veiled beneath love, pity, and patience as to be concealed from the man whose conduct excites it. And note in particular that there is no inconsistency in attributing to God anger with Moses. Moses himself was to be excused, as having only recently become acquainted with God; but he could not escape his share of the due effects arising out of the alienation of the entire human race from God. Besides, God's anger must be looked upon as one of his instruments in bringing us effectually to compliance with his will. God's anger is really part of the goodness which leads us to repentance; and if gentler methods fail, then the time will come at last when that

anger must be decidedly manifested, even for our good. Moses could not but admit that so far he had been dealt with very gently indeed. God, quickly and tenderly responsive, had met every hint of difficulty with a strong encouragement. But all the encouragements had made no real difference in Moses' mood of mind. He turns upon God in the querulous unappreciative strain indicated in ver. 13. Thus he unconsciously signifies that the time has come for God to change the method of his action. Moses, like a persistently heedless scholar, must be made to feel that his master cannot be trifled with. God speaks, not that we may discuss and parley with him, but that we may obey. Let Moses now understand that the time has come for him at once to go forth.

II. THE ANGER IS MINGLED WITH A GRACIOUS PROMISE OF APPROPRIATE AID. God's anger with his own chosen ones is but a sudden darkness to make the following light more useful and esteemed. God, who has just shown his power to Moses in the burning bush and the following signs, now shows power in a way even more attractive. He is one who can at the same moment warn and comfort—not only smiting that he may heal, but able to blend smiting and healing together. Even though Moses has provoked his indignation, he does not leave him with a bare promise that somehow or other his defect of utterance will be supplied. God sweeps away this latest difficulty as completely as he had done the previous ones. And note moreover that he disposed of it in his own unexpected way. It was better to leave Moses as he was, and make Aaron his spokesman, than to enrich him in his own person with all gifts of utterance and leave him alone. By linking the two men together, God was constantly teaching them the need of mutual subordination. If they would only be companions in humility they should also be companions in prosperity and in gladness of heart. Sad and disastrous would be the day when Moses should be disposed to say to Aaron, "I have no need of thee," or Aaron to Moses, "I have no need of thee." Aaron had what Moses lacked. Moses had the matter of a Divine and glad message, but he felt utterly at a loss how he was to get it properly laid before all whom it concerned. Aaron, on the other hand, had voice and faculty of speech, but behind that voice there had hitherto been nothing of commandment, direction, and encouragement. Aaron, says the Lord, was a man who could speak well; that is, as we may take it, a man able to speak distinctly and impressively—one who could deliver any message entrusted to him in a way which would not obscure the message, nor draw ridicule on the utterer of it. Moses and Aaron went together like the musician and the instrument on which he plays. *Thus we see the way in which God binds us together by our very deficiencies.* He constitutes us so that we are always more or less dependent on our fellow-men, and sometimes the dependence is very marked indeed. It is well for us in the midway and strength of life to consider that there may be but a step between us and the need of the tenderest sympathy. When we are most independent there are possibilities lying before us—yes, there are even certainties—which should moderate our pride and self-sufficiency. Manly independence is one of the greatest blessings; egotistic isolation one of the greatest curses. They that are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak; there are none of us so strong but that in some emergency of life we may accept the relief; there are none of us so weak but that we may do something to provide the relief. In a world which is so full of temptations to discord and rivalry it is a great comfort to remember that God is constantly working to counteract them. He guides human affairs, even as he guides the planets themselves; the centripetal force is greater than the centrifugal. If every one of us were free to work out the desires of our selfish hearts, anarchy would come with fearful rapidity.—Y.

Ver. 17.—*The importance of the rod: God guards Moses against a very natural oversight.* "Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand." Was Moses, then, likely to forget it? That rod had just been pointed out to him as connected with his favourable reception by Israel. It was to be the instrument for helping to deliver him from one of his chief apprehensions. And yet it was as likely as not that in the hurry of gathering his household goods together, the rod would be thrown into a corner of the fold as a mere bit of wood that could easily be replaced if Moses had once again to become a shepherd. Notice—1. *That other things seemed, to the natural eye, of a great*

deal more consequence. As Martha, when Jesus came to her house, was cumbered with much serving, and in the middle of it all was unwittingly neglecting the one thing needful, so Moses, amid the distracting questions that filled his mind, had no inducement to regard the rod with such attention as corresponded to its real importance. Here is one of the great difficulties in bringing the natural man to discern the things of the Spirit of God. Not only is man, by nature, indifferent to spiritual things, but he is absorbingly occupied in the desires, cares, and apprehensions of the natural life. When the disciples of Christ had their minds filled with carnal anticipations of the kingdom of heaven, they heard even such glorious news as that of the resurrection of their Master as if they heard it not. 2. *This rod seemed a thing of particularly little consequence.* Were not a thousand such within easy reach? Might not God be trusted to turn any rod Moses took up just as he had turned this? If it had only been some precious stone, something costly, elaborate, and rare, he would not have forgotten it. 3. *The real consequence of the rod appeared clearly in the light of after events.* Suppose Moses had left the rod behind him. The likelihood is that he would very quickly have been stopped on the way, even as he was stopped and threatened because of his uncircumcised son. And if he had been allowed to go on, assuredly he would have been put to shame on coming into the presence of Israel. God was beginning to teach Moses that strict, unflinching attention to details would be necessary when he again came to this mountain to take his part in serving God on it. 4. *The rod itself was a great sign that Israel was to be delivered not by human but by Divine operations.* It was probably not only the companion of Moses, but the constant companion. Ever in his hand, it was something by which he could readily turn his thoughts away from his own inability to the all-sufficing power of God. It is our folly, both as concerns our own salvation and the salvation of our fellow-men, that we go out without the rod. When the Israelites saw Moses coming among them with his rod, clinging to it, though there seemed no use for it, some of them perhaps said, "Throw that rod aside; why cumber yourself with it, and become a laughingstock and a puzzle to beholders." And in like manner how often have those put in trust with the Gospel been exhorted to lay aside those elements which to the natural man appear mere excrescences and deformities. We may well believe that to the first apostles, it was one of the hardest things in the world to keep firm to the essential parts of their message. What the rod was to Moses, going forth with it and working signs, that must the doctrine of the Cross be to all apostles. Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them which are called, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.—Y.

Vers. 1—9.—Weakness and strength for God's service. I. FEAR OF THE REJECTION OF THE MESSAGE WE BEAR FOR GOD MAKES ITS DELIVERANCE IMPOSSIBLE. The tidings he was to bear were so wonderful that he believed his words would be listened to with utter incredulity. Our Gospel is more wonderful still. To speak it, our eye must rest less on the message, and more on God's power to chastise and to bless. We are not critics of, nor apologists for, the Gospel: we are messengers sent before God's face. Our Master is behind us.

II. MIRACLES BELONG TO THE INFANCY OF FAITH. The signs are given because of unbelief. Elijah and Elisha work miracles among the tribes which had almost wholly forsaken God; Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, work none. The Apostles alone were empowered to bestow miraculous gifts, and these died out with the men who received them from the Apostles' hands. To bring again the age of miracles would be retrogression, not advance.

III. THE MIRACLES AS SIGNS. 1. The rod cast upon the ground becomes a serpent; the serpent dealt with in obedience to God's command becomes a rod. They who reject God's guidance will be pursued by his terrors, and if we deal with our foes as God directs us they will help, not harm us. 2. The hand put in the bosom (the attitude of determined indifference) becomes leprous; placed again in obedience to God's command, it is made whole. God can make the strength of the disobedient a burden and horror; and if we rest in him our loathsomeness and weakness will be changed into health and strength. 3. The sweet Nile waters changed into blood. The delight of the land to which unbelief will cling will become a loathing and a curse.—U.

Vers. 10—17.—*God's wrath will fall where his service is declined.* I. **MOSES' OBJECTION AND GOD'S ANSWER** (10—12). 1. He deems himself unfit to occupy the place even of spokesman to the Lord. The objection was based upon a real infirmity, which so far God had not removed. The same objection urged as a reason to-day for not engaging in Sunday-school work, etc. The want of power may be real, but is it a sufficient reason for refusal? 2. God's answer. (1) He points to his power. Is that realised? (2) He gives the promise of help. Our weakness will merely afford a field on which God's might and faithfulness will be manifested.

II. **MOSES' REFUSAL AND GOD'S ANGER** (13—17). 1. The disinclination to the service which lay behind his objections is at last manifested. That very name (Adonai) "my master," by which he addresses God, might have rebuked him. But Moses in this may be the type of ourselves. We acknowledge that all we have, that we ourselves, are his, and yet is there no service which no amount of reasoning or expostulation can prevail upon us to undertake for God? 2. God's anger. (1) A revelation of the judgment which awaits the slothful servant. Its shadows fall now in the withdrawal of his favour and the decay of spiritual life. (2) It left its mark upon the life of Moses although his refusal was followed by repentance. Aaron was joined with him, and where in the eye of Israel and the world there would have been one figure only, there is henceforth two. The mark of God's anger is left in a lessened glory.

III. **THE POWER OF THE PAST FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE.** "Take this rod"—not another. It reminded him of the time when he contended with God, and ministered humility in the moments of mightiest triumph. The Cross of Jesus the memento of our stubbornness and guilt.—U.

Vers. 1—17.—*Divine supplements for human infirmity.* "Now therefore go, and I will be with thee," etc. (ver. 12.) It is not at all clear whether the four objections urged by Moses against receiving the Divine commission were presented at one interview with the manifested God, or whether the controversy recorded Ex. iii. 1—iv. 17, occupied weeks or months. The probabilities are in favour of some considerable time. See iv. 10, and specially in the Heb. In dealing with this particular plea, viz. the lack of eloquence, we must bear in mind that it is not for every man to be a Moses, or a preacher, or even a worker. True, there is a ministry for each and all; but some are called to one of patience in suffering. Treat the subject therefore as one of Divine supplementing of human infirmity generally. Comp. 2 Cor. xii. 7—10.

I. **SHRINKING FROM DIVINE SERVICE.** Not a doubt of this in the case of Moses. Earlier he was not unwilling to put himself forward as the champion of Israel—Acts vii. 25; but diffidence came with years. So Jeremiah—Jer. i. 6. So all the prophets—their message a "burden"—something heavy to be carried, to which they braced themselves. So Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Nor is the feeling unhealthy or undesirable. Self-confidence looks at first the best preparation for great enterprises. But is it so? Look at life. In all departments, to estimate aright the greatness of the work, the comparative feebleness of our resources, and yet the weight of our responsibility, is the condition of success; e.g. Lord Clyde in India. The Christian minister. By the reluctance of Moses, measure the irresistible impulse upon his spirit. Nor is consciousness of incapacity always the reality of incapacity.

II. **THE EXCUSE THAT IS OFFERED.** Take ver. 10, translated thus: "And said Moses unto Jehovah, Let it please Thee, O Lord, not a man of words am I, either since yesterday, or since the day before, or since the time Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; for heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue am I." 1. *The time-hint.* An intimation here of a long controversy between Moses and God. 2. *The meaning of Moses.* He was not a "man of words"—not eloquent, in the popular sense; he was heavy—doubly heavy—of lip and tongue. A great writer of poetry and prose, but not a speaker. This self-estimate just. Yet there were compensations. He was "mighty in word." Distinguish between fluency and power. He was, too, a man of thought. A man of action. 3. *A lesson in passing:* "Take heed how ye hear!"—"Take heed what ye hear." Compare the massive eloquence of the Puritan age, and the men it made, with what seems to be now the taste of many for the sensational—with present impatience of so-called "heavy" preaching. Where would Israel have been, had Israel turned its

back on the "heavy" Moses, and followed the lead of the brilliant but perhaps shallow Aaron, who could make molten images under the very shadow of Sinai, the mount of God, ere reverberating thunders had died away in the desolation of the desert. 4. *The essence of his excuse.* The defect was to the mind of Moses fatal—eloquence was the one quality material to his mission. To many missions (e.g. military or administrative) eloquence is not essential. The mission of Moses was diplomatic—it needed tongue-power. "Say unto the elders of Israel!" "Say unto Pharaoh." He had to persuade a nation of slaves that he was the heaven-sent deliverer. He had to go into the audience-chamber of the greatest potentate of earth, and speak to him for a nation, and for Jehovah behind the nation. *Just the one thing he could not do; and for which he had not the indispensable qualification.* So in thousands of other cases, of various forms of duty and responsibility, of sorrow and perplexity. "Tongue" and "lip" and "word" are what the service demands, and all are wanting.

III. THE DIVINE DECLINING OF EXCUSE. Notice—1. *The changing tone.* It is—(1) *Encouraging.* Vers. 11, 12. (2) *Indignant.* Moses said, ver. 13: "Let it please Thee, O Lord, send I pray Thee by a hand Thou wilt send." (See the Heb.) This sounds submissive, as though Moses meant, "Send me." But from the translation of the LXX. the words seem to have carried a disloyal meaning, now lost in the Heb.: "I pray Thee, O Lord, prepare for Thyself another capable, whom Thou wilt send." And so Jehovah was indignant. Self-diffidence may be carried too far. Yet was not Moses wholly cast away—for Jehovah took up again a tone likely to woo him to his duty. (3) *Encouraging again:* vers. 14—17. 2. *The counter pleas.* God allows the truth of all we say, and then comes in with his own Divine counter pleas why he should not accept either our excuses or declining—of which the main articles are these: The glory of God will be manifested—(1) *In the use of man* at all. God might have glorified himself in breaking to pieces the empire of Egypt without the intervention of any human agency. Pietists have sometimes thought that they glorified God by making him everything, man nothing. But God glorifies himself more by using men, for men are such poor tools to work with. E.g. Quentin Matsys making the beautiful covering for the well that stands in front of Antwerp cathedral with only a file and hammer. How! Such work with only file and hammer? So great an overthrow here, and such a creation of nation and church by a man, and such a man? The strength of God is evermore working by our weakness. (2) *By the imperfection* of our powers: vers. 11, 12. God the Creator of the imperfection as well as the power—the dumbness of the dumb, as well as the eloquence of the eloquent. He does this—i.e. supplements our imperfect power, by—i. *Other faculties in the man.* So here "the rod" of might in deed was to supplement the imperfect speech. [See also above, II. 2.] ii. *Other men.* Here by Aaron, vers. 14—16. iii. *Himself.* In the earlier part of this controversy it was, "Certainly I will be with thee"—a general declaration. Now it is, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." The Almighty power goes along with the imperfect organ of the Divine will. Apply as suggested above to all—whether in the activity or in the patience of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 18—23.—If Moses had, as we have supposed, been accepted into the Midianitish nation, he would need permission to withdraw himself from the tribal head. This head was now Jether, or Jethro, Moses' connexion by marriage, perhaps his brother-in-law, perhaps a less near connexion. Nations and tribes were at this time anxious to keep up their numbers, and jealous of the desertion even of a single member. Jethro, however, made no opposition to the return of Moses to Egypt, even though he designed to be accompanied

by his wife and sons (ver. 20). Scripture gives no indications of the motives which actuated him. Perhaps the Midianites were at this time straitened for want of room. Perhaps the peculiar circumstances of Moses were held to justify his application for leave.

Ver. 18.—My brethren probably means here "my relations" (compare Gen. xiii. 8; xxix. 12). Moses could scarcely doubt but that some of his countrymen were still living. It would not have been for the interest of the Egyptians to exterminate them. Go in peace

means, "you have my leave—I do not oppose your going."

Ver. 19.—**And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return.** It would seem that Moses was still reluctant, and was delaying his departure, even after he had obtained Jethro's leave to go. Perhaps he was making it an excuse to himself for not setting out that if he returned he might still suffer death on account of the offence which had driven him into exile. To remove this last impediment, God assured him that "all the men were dead who had sought his life."

Ver. 20.—**His sons.** Gershom, already mentioned (ch. ii. 22), and Eliezer (ch. xviii. 4), who was probably an infant. **Set them upon an ass.** Literally, "the ass," i.e. the one ass that belonged to him. The word might best be translated "*his* ass." When Moses is said to have "set *them* upon" the animal, we need not understand "all of them." Probably Zipporah and her baby rode, while Gershom walked with his father. Though horses were known in Egypt before this, they could not be used in the Sinaitic peninsula, and the employment of an ass by Moses is thoroughly appropriate. **Returned.** i.e. "set out to return." **Took the rod of God in his hand.** This is of course the "rod" of ver. 2, which had become "the rod of God" by the miracle of vers. 3 and 4, and which God had commanded him to take to Egypt (ver. 17).

Vers. 21—23.—**And the Lord said, etc.** Now that Moses had at last given up his own will and entered on the path of obedience, God comforted him with a fresh revelation, and gave him fresh instructions as to what exactly he was to say to Pharaoh. The statements of ver. 21 are not new, being anticipated in ch. iii. 19—20; but the directions in vers. 22—23 are wholly new, and point to the greatest of all the miracles wrought in Egypt—the death of the firstborn.

Ver. 21.—**All those wonders.** The miracles wrought in Egypt are called *niphēlōth*, "marvels," *mōphēthim*, "portents," and *ōthōth*, "signs." *Mōphēthim*, the word here used signifies something out of the ordinary course of nature, and corresponds to the Greek *τέρατα* and the Latin *portenta*. It is a different word from that used in ch. iii. 20. In "all those wonders" are included, not only the three signs of ch. iv. 3—9, but the whole series of miracles afterwards wrought in Egypt, and glanced at in ch. iii. 20. **I will harden his heart.** This expression, here used for the first

time, and repeated so frequently in chs. vii—xiv., has given offence to many. Men, it is said, harden their own hearts against God: God does not actively interfere to harden the heart of anyone. And this is so far true, that a special interference of God on the occasion, involving a supernatural hardening of Pharaoh's heart, is not to be thought of. But among the natural punishments which God has attached to sin, would seem to be the hardening of the entire nature of the man who sins. If men "do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them up to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28); if they resist the Spirit, he "takes his holy Spirit from them" (Ps. li. 11); if they sin against light he withdraws the light; if they stifle their natural affections of kindness, compassion and the like, it is a law of his providence that those affections shall wither and decay. This seems to be the "hardening of the heart" here intended—not an abnormal and miraculous interference with the soul of Pharaoh, but the natural effect upon his soul under God's moral government of those acts which he wilfully and wrongfully committed.

Ver. 22.—**Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Israel is my son.** This would be addressing Pharaoh in language familiar to him. Each Egyptian monarch of this period was accustomed to style himself, "son of the Sun," and to claim and expect the constant favour and protection of his divine parent. It was also quite within the range of Egyptian ideas that God should declare himself by word of mouth to his special favourites, and give directions as to their actions. (See 'Records of the Past,' vol. iv. p. 43.) **My firstborn.** Not only "as dear to me as to a father his firstborn" (Kalisch), but the only nation that I have adopted, and taken into covenant, so as to be unto me "a peculiar people above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. xiv. 2). Israel's sonship is here mentioned for the first time.

Ver. 23.—**I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.** For the fulfilment of the threat, see ch. xii. 29. Moses did not utter it till all other arguments were exhausted, and he knew that he was having his last interview with the monarch (ch. x. 29; xi. 4, 5). In this reserve and in the whole series of his dealings with the Egyptian king, we must regard him as simply carrying out the special directions which, after his return to Egypt, he continually received from the Almighty. (See ch. vi. 11; vii. 9, 15 19; viii. 1, 5, 16, 20, etc.)

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 19.—*The fact of having a mission does not release a man from social obligations.* Direct communications with Jehovah, appointment to a great and glorious mission, with the power of working miracles, might have rendered many a man neglectful of ordinary obligations, might have seemed to place him above the necessity of asking anyone's

permission to do as he pleased. But Moses read his duty differently. He had been received among the Midianites with great kindness, had been given a home and a wife, and probably enrolled formally as an adopted member of the tribe or nation. Though Reuel, the head of the tribe at the time of his coming, had ceased to hold that position, having probably died, the tribe had a new head, to whom he was bound, if not by all the obligations which had attached him to Reuel, yet by several very definite and tangible bonds. Jethro was his near relative and his tribal chief; he had perhaps sworn allegiance to him; he had certainly received from him protection, employment, sustenance (ch. iii. 1). To have quitted his service without permission, to have left his flock in the Sinaitic valleys, and proceeded straight to Egypt would have been easy, but would have been unkind, ungrateful, and contrary to the accepted standard of tribal morality at the time. Moses therefore went back to Midian from Sinai before proceeding to Egypt—made, that is, a considerable journey in the opposite direction to that which he was about to take—in order to obtain Jethro's consent to his going, thus acting the part of a faithful servant and a good subject. It would be well if all who believe themselves to have Divine missions, and to be highly gifted, would follow Moses' example, and not make their mission and high gifts an excuse for neglect of ordinary duties and obligations. Moses' example, and the words of One higher than Moses, should teach them that it becomes all men to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15). If those with high missions neglect even small social duties, they "give an occasion to the adversary to blaspheme."

Reticence sometimes a duty. We are not bound in all cases to tell even those in authority over us the reasons, much less *all* the reasons, which actuate us. Moses wanted Jethro's permission to quit his adopted tribe, and return to his native country and his people. He gave a reason which was not untrue, but which was far from being his sole, or even his main, reason. If he had said more, if he had revealed his mission, he would probably have raised a storm of opposition to his departure. He would have been called a fanatic, a visionary, a madman; and everything would have been said that was possible to deter him from carrying out his projects. If Moses felt, as he may have felt, that he was too weak to encounter such a storm of opposition, he was wise to be silent and so not arouse it.

The reasonable wishes of a subordinate should be granted cheerfully. Jethro's answer, "Go in peace," may well be taken as a pattern by those in authority. It is kindly, gracious, and ungrudging. The chieftain of a tribe might naturally have demurred to the withdrawal of a family of subjects, the master to the loss of a valuable servant, the head of a household to parting with near kinsfolk. But Jethro, deeming Moses' plea a sufficient one, is careful not to mar the grace of his concession by a single word of objection, reproach, or querulousness. Nor is "Go in peace" even a bare consent, but a consent embodying a blessing. It is equivalent to "Go, and the Lord go with thee!" Note also the absence of inquisitiveness. Jethro does not pester Moses with questions—does not ask, "Is the reason thou hast assigned thy true reason," or "thy sole reason?" or, "When wilt thou return?" or, "Why take thy wife and children?" or, "How wilt thou live in Egypt?" or, "Art thou not afraid to return thither?" He will not pain his near connection by doubt or distrust, or even undue curiosity. He will not travel beyond the record. His consent has been asked. He gives it freely, fully cheerfully.

Vrs. 19—23.—*Obedience brings a blessing.* There must have been something in the hesitation of Moses which caused it not to be wholly displeasing to God. Once he was "angered" (ch. iii. 14), but even then not greatly offended—content to show his anger by inflicting a slight penalty. Now, when Moses still delayed in Midian, how gentle the rebuke that is administered—"Go, return;" and to the rebuke moreover is appended an encouragement—"all the men are dead who sought thy life." Observe also that no sooner does Moses obey, than his reluctance seems wholly forgiven; the Lord appears afresh to him, and rewards his obedience by fresh revelations. "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." This tender relationship, never before acknowledged, is breathed into the prophet's ear as he enters on the path of obedience. What may he not expect, if he continues in it! Surely blessings upon blessings. Deliverance, triumph, continued, never-ending protection are assured to them whom God declares to be his

children. Moses, as their leader, will have the glory of their success. Even the might of Pharaoh will be impotent if used against them. Should Pharaoh refuse to liberate God's "firstborn," he will lose his own.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 18-21.—The return. Weeks, perhaps months, intervened between the revelation at the bush and Moses' actual departure from Midian. Time was given for allowing the first agitation of his spirit to subside, for enabling him to take the just measure of the task entrusted to him, for the final overcoming of his involuntary reluctance. An interval is presupposed in ver. 10—"Neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant," and is implied again here. Events were not yet quite ready for his departure. The preparation of the man, and the preparation of events (ver. 19) were going on simultaneously. God would have his servant brought, not only to a clear apprehension of his message, but into a state of intelligent and entire sympathy with it, before actually starting him on his journey. The call would come at the proper time.

I. PERMISSION RECEIVED (ver. 18). The request to Jethro was couched in simple but courteous terms, and was as courteously responded to. Moses said nothing of the revelations he had received. 1. He had no *call* to say anything. His message was to the elders of Israel, not to Jethro. 2. It would have been a *breach of confidence* to have divulged what passed between him and God without permission. 3. It was not *advisable* to say anything. He would have required to have entered into explanations, and might have encountered unbelief and opposition. If Jethro perceived, as possibly he did, that there was something underlying Moses' request which he did not care to state, he had the good sense to refrain from prying too curiously into what did not concern him. The parting was courteous and friendly, creditable alike to both. Observe: 1. There are times when it is prudent to keep one's own counsel. 2. It is the mark of a wise man that he *can* keep his own counsel. 3. It is well to be reserved about private religious experience (Gal. i. 16, 17). 4. It is one's duty on all occasions to study friendliness and courtesy. 5. It is nearly as high a mark of character not to be too curious in prying into the secrets of others, as it is to be cautious in keeping silence about those entrusted to us.

II. THE WAY CLEARED (ver. 19). As suggested above, Moses had probably been instructed to wait a Divine intimation as to the time of his actual departure. In a work so important every step must be taken under direct Divine guidance. Cf. the movements of Mary and Joseph with the child Jesus (Matt. ii.). And the warning was not given till God was able to announce that all the men were dead who had formerly sought his life. This would be a comfort to Moses, and would remove at least one set of fears as to his personal safety. There may have been another reason for delaying to this point. Time had again brought matters to the condition of a *tabula rasa*. The conflict now to be begun was not to be demeaned by being mixed up with the spites and enmities of a buried past. Observe: 1. How God times events with a view to every class of conditions. 2. How God consults for the safety of his servants. 3. How God's purposes move with steady step to their accomplishment, while mortals, who thought to hinder them, drop into their graves, and are forgotten.

III. THE JOURNEY ENTERED UPON (ver. 20). 1. Moses took with him *his wife and two sons*. The desire to have them with him was natural, but he afterwards saw reason for sending them back. The work he was engaged in was of a kind not compatible with family entanglements. There are times when a man's hands need to be absolutely free; when it is his duty not to enter into relationships which would encumber him; or, if these already exist, to make the temporary sacrifice of comfort and affection which the exigencies of his work demand (Matt. viii. 21, 22; 2 Tim. ii. 4). 2. He took with him *the rod of God*. This was indispensable. By it he was to work signs (ver. 17). The rod of the Christian worker is his Bible. Armed with that, he can speak with Divine authority, work miracles in the souls of men and confound the mightiest of his enemies.—J. O.

Ver. 21.—Hardening. God communicates anew with Moses, fortifying his resolution to appear before Pharaoh, putting words into his mouth, and warning him of the effect his message would produce. He was not to fail to do all his wonders before Pharaoh, though the only effect would be to harden the monarch's heart—to confirm him in his resolution not to let the people go.

I. THE WORD OF GOD IS TO BE ADDRESSED TO MEN, WHATEVER RECEPTION IT MAY MEET WITH. It is to be set forth, and the evidence which attests it exhibited, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek. ii. 5); and this—1. That God's will may be made known. 2. That men's dispositions may be tested. 3. That if men disobey they may be left without excuse. 4. That ulterior purposes may be fulfilled. For men's unbelief cannot make the faith of God without effect (Rom. iii. 3). If men disbelieve and are hardened, God will use even their hardening as the point of attachment for some new link in the chain of his providential developments.

II. GOD INFALLIBLY FOREKNOWS THE EFFECT OF EVERY APPEAL OR MESSAGE HE ADDRESSES TO HIS MORAL CREATURES. He knows those to whom his servants will be "the savour of death unto death," and those to whom they will be "the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. ii. 16). But the knowledge that his Word will be rejected is not a reason for keeping it back. As respects these foreknown effects, we are not permitted to say either—1. That God wills (*i.e.* desires) that his Word should harden; or 2. That in any case it hardens by his *arbitrarily* withholding the grace which would have produced an opposite result. Yet Divine sovereignty is not to be denied in the effects produced by the preaching of the Word, or in God's dealings with men in mercy and judgment generally. He will be a bold student of Divine things who ventures to assert that by *no* means known to him could God have subdued the obstinacy even of a Pharaoh. Hearts as stubborn have yielded before now. We cannot solve these anomalies. Enough for us to know that God's sovereignty, however exercised, is ever righteous, holy, and, could we see all, loving.

III. GOD'S WORD, WHEN ITS MESSAGE IS RESISTED, HARDENS THE HEART THAT RESISTS. **11.** The hardening of the heart is here attributed to God, as in other places it is attributed to Pharaoh himself. The latter statement occasions no difficulty. It is the invariable law, and one which is constantly being exemplified, that he who resists grace and truth incurs the penalty of being hardened. That result follows from the constitution of the moral nature. But precisely in this fact lies the explanation of the other mode of statement, that the hardening of the heart is from God. For God is concerned in the results which flow from the operation of his own laws, and takes (providentially) the responsibility of them. We may go even further, and say that God *designs* that those who resist his truth *shall* be hardened by it; just as he designs that those who believe and obey it shall be saved. And the stronger way of putting the matter, harsh as it seems, has its own advantages. Resisters of the truth do well to remember that in their attitude of opposition they have to do, not merely with "laws," reacting to darken the mind and indurate the heart, but with a living God within and behind these laws, lending his solemn sanction to their operations, willing the results which flow from them, and righteously punishing sin by means of them. This explanation, indeed, is not complete. Other phases of the subject come into view later. Meanwhile the preacher of the Gospel is not to be astonished that his word, in many cases, produces hardening effects. This is foreseen by God, and is taken up into his plan. Learn also how a career of iniquity is often punished by the transgressor being brought into circumstances which, merciful in their own operation, yet lead to his greater hardening.—J. O.

VERS. 22, 23.—Israel a type of sonship. Consider—1. *The condescension of God in the establishing of this relationship.* A nation of slaves; in the eyes of the Egyptians little better than a nation of lepers; yet Jehovah says of them, "Israel is my son, my firstborn." "Behold what manner of love," etc. (1 John iii. 1). 2. *The privileges implied in it.* On this cf. Deut. i. 31—34; viii. 2—6; xxxii. 9—15. Reflect how Israel was led, fed, guided, trained, chastened, delivered from enemies, and conducted to a bountiful inheritance. These privileges have all their counterparts in the experience of the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). 3. *The responsibilities it imposed on others.* Because Israel was God's son, his firstborn, Pharaoh

was to refrain from oppressing his son, and if he did not he would be smitten in his own firstborn. (1) As men treat God's children so will God treat them. He notes, and he will reward, kindnesses done to his sons, and he will avenge their wrongs. (2) God's children may safely leave the avenging of their wrongs to God. It is not their work, but his, to avenge them; the rule for them is to avenge not themselves, but rather to give place to wrath; heaping coals of fire on the head of the enemy by returning him good for his evil (Rom. xii. 19—21).—J. O.

Vers. 18—23.—*True faith and its joy.* I. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH. 1. Note Moses' swift compliance with God's command. He tarried no longer: "He went and returned . . . and said . . . let me go." He does not seek advice. He does not even wait for a convenient opportunity of urging his request. We must wait neither upon time nor men. If God has spoken, we must obey. 2. His wise reticence. He said nothing of what he had seen and heard. These experiences are a holy place where the soul meets alone with God. Where this holy place is profaned the soul suffers loss.

II. CONSOLATIONS AROUND ALONG THE PATHWAY OF OBEDIENT FAITH. 1. Moses receives Jethro's permission and blessing. 2. Fears are removed (ver. 19). 3. He passes on with the consciousness of power: he "took the rod of God in his hand." 4. He has the assurance of victory. Pharaoh's heart will be hardened, yet there is one judgment in reserve which will bow that heart to compliance with the will of God (vers. 22, 23). The cause of God cannot be defeated. As we go on in obedience to God's commandment our advance is a continuous discovery of God's goodness. The lions which we saw in the distance are chained, and do not harm us.—U.

Vers. 24—31.—*The three meetings.* I. THE LORD'S MEETING WITH MOSES (vers. 24—26). 1. Moses' sin. (1) Circumcision was the solemnly expressed will of God (Gen. xvii. 9—14). (2) It was enforced by exclusion from the blessings of God's covenant. (3) Preparations had been made for the journey, but the circumcision of Eliezer was not among them. 2. The reason of the omission, weak yielding to the prejudices of his Midianitish wife. 3. His guilt. God looked beyond the sign to that which it signified and partially accomplished—the claiming of the life for himself and righteousness. Moses' disobedience was therefore murder by neglect, and life shall answer for life. The guilt of the unfaithful watchmen in Zion (Ezek. xxxiii. 7—9); of parents who never seek by instruction and example and prayer to have their children circumcised with the circumcision of Christ. 4. God will withstand the inconsistent worker. He will permit his work to be done only by the righteous and the faithful. This is seen both in churches and in individuals.

II. THE MEETING OF MOSES AND AARON (vers. 27, 28). 1. Moses had to proceed alone (Ex. xviii. 2), the type of many who pass to service through loss. 2. God prepares consolation in the desert (Matt. xix. 27—29). 3. The marvels of God's providence. He makes their meeting with each other a meeting with himself. "They met at the mount of God." 4. Human love hallowed by the Divine love—"And Moses told Aaron," etc.

III. THEIR MEETING WITH THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL (vers. 29—31). Where Moses dreaded failure he meets success. There is more faith waiting to receive God's word than we imagine: souls wait round us like the parched land for the showers.—U.

Ver. 19.—*The unsolicited removal of a source of great anxiety.* God assures Moses that he has no longer any cause to fear on account of the Egyptian slain forty years before. This last piece of information casts a flood of light on all the hesitation, reluctance, and perplexity which Moses has hitherto shown in his intercourse with Jehovah. It might have made a great deal of difference, if he had only known at the beginning that the men were dead who sought his life. Not but that Moses was honest enough in all the pleas he had started in order to escape from this mission and responsibility; but, deep under all other considerations, and very potent, even though he had been ashamed to confess it, lay his fear because of the slain Egyptian. He might even have got as far as the expressing of the fear, if God had not brought him sharply up by the kindling of his anger, and made him feel that of two perils it was wise to choose the lesser. Better run the risk from some Egyptian breathing vengeance than from the visitations of an angry God; and yet, though checked from speaking, he

would be saying very earnestly in his heart, "Oh that I only knew myself to be safe in this matter." Remember the terror with which, after so long a time, Jacob approached his injured brother Esau. Certainly Jacob had the bitter consciousness of wrong-doing to heighten his fears, but Moses would have equally the consciousness of danger. Nor can it be too often impressed upon us, in considering this opening stage of Moses' acquaintance with God, that while he had a profound impression as to the real and awful Being with whom he had come in contact, the extent of his knowledge was not correspondent to the depth of his feeling. He had come into a real acquaintance with God; but it was at first, of necessity, a very imperfect and blundering one. The defective notions of Moses, with respect to God, find their New Testament parallel in the earth-born and earth-limited questions which the disciples so often addressed to Jesus. Hence, even though Moses has seen so much of God's power and promptitude in dealing with every difficulty he has raised, he still remains uncertain whether God has taken into account this peril from the slain Egyptian. It is no easy thing to get to a real and operative conviction that God knows even the smallest transaction in the past life of every one of us.—Y.

Vers. 18—31.—Facing Egypt. "And the people believed, and when," etc. (Ex. iv. 31). This section of the history may be homiletically treated under three geographical headings, which will keep the historical development prominent, without obscuring the moral and spiritual elements.

I. MIDIAN. From Sinai Moses returned to Midian. Reuel now dead, Jethro, probably his son, becomes priest and sheikh of the tribe. [We take Jethro to have been the brother-in-law of Moses. See 'Speaker's Commentary,' additional note on Exodus ii. 18.] In this part of the story it is of moment to observe the situation of Midian—east, and perhaps also west, of the Eilat Gulf. Hence travellers from Egypt to Midian, or *vice versâ*, would come on the journey unto "the mount of God." Moses could not stay long in Midian. There was now pressing on him—1. The original impulse (ii. 11—14). 2. The commission of the Burning Bush. 3. The intelligence that it was now safe to go. [Ver. 19 furnishes a convenient opportunity for noticing the Old Testament formula, on the correct understanding of which so much depends, in which God is represented to have directly said and done what he *may* have done only mediately. Here, *e.g.*, did God speak out of the air into the ear of Moses, or was the intelligence brought in the ordinary way, say by caravans across the desert? It is a large subject, but the following points are suggested: "God said," "God did" this or that, are to this day formulæ with the Arabs. This Oriental habit of the cousins of the Hebrews is the opposite of the Occidental. We suppress the name of God as much as possible; and if constrained to refer to the Divine Being, we allude to him as "Providence" or "Heaven." The Oriental habit is more direct and truer; for God is in the secondary cause, which fact some amongst ourselves ignore. The Arabian style of to-day was the Hebrew style, and the mode of the Old Testament. In the interpretation of this formula we must be careful not to assume always the direct or supernatural, though perhaps occasionally we shall have no other alternative. Indeed, no doubt that is so.] On the receipt of this news Moses paid fealty to the chief of the tribe which had given him a home for forty years; asked permission to return; obtained it, and set out with "rod," wife, two sons, and, no doubt, the usual service and attendants of a considerable caravan.

II. THE DESERT—ON THE ROAD. On the road, which passed through scenes of incomparable grandeur, several incidents of the first importance occurred. 1. *A word of Divine encouragement* (vers. 21—23). Jehovah inspired his servant with courage, warned him that success would not be immediate, and gave him the exact message for Pharaoh. [Whether all this came *direct* from God, or grew up in the mind of Moses, in the way of meditation, under the guidance of the Spirit, must be left to the decision of each.] But something may be here said on ver. 21: "I will harden," etc. The objection will occur to every one—How can God punish men for that which he himself causes or does? This "hardening" may be here considered once for all. The following considerations will have weight:—1. God is often in the Old Testament said to do what he only *permits* to be done. 2. In this passage of history (Ex. iv.—xiv.) God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart ten times, Pharaoh to harden his own three times; and the

fact that Pharaoh's heart was hardened is stated five times. 3. Generally, until after the fifth plague. Pharaoh hardens his own heart; then, and only then, save in Ex. vii. 13, God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart. 4. The fact seems to be that at first Pharaoh sinfully hardened his own heart, and then God permissively allowed the process to go on and confirmed it. 5. It must also be borne in mind that the very same gracious influences will either harden or soften, according to the subject. The same sun melts wax and hardens clay. The final responsibility of the hardening lay with Pharaoh. The homiletic applications are obvious; but see a striking poem in Dr. Taylor's 'Moses' (p. 75), by Dr. J. A. Alexander, beginning: "There is a time, we know not when." Another lesson is obvious, as soon as mentioned: We are not justified in looking for results which God has not promised. The deliverance of Israel was promised and certain, but there was no promise that Pharaoh would voluntarily yield. 2. *A deed of Divine rebuke* (vers. 24—26). This passage is obscure, difficult, yet full of moral significance: must therefore be put in a true light. The incident shapes itself to our minds thus: Moses came on the journey to a caravanserai, burdened with a grievous memory of duty neglected, of the Divine covenant virtually repudiated (Gen. xvii. 9—14). The younger son had not been circumcised. This neglect was weak; had been simply to please the Midianitish mother. Hence anxiety, contributing with other causes to fever and threatening death—"Jehovah met him," etc. Zipporah was persuaded to perform the rite. The "stone" would be a flint implement, considered more sacred than iron or bronze. To this day flint is used in New Guinea even for shaving the head. The task was performed unwillingly, hence her invective, twice repeated. Then Jehovah released Moses—"let him go." It was now clear that the wife in these matters was out of sympathy with Moses, and so, on the ground of moral incompatibility, was sent back with her children to the tents of Midian (Ex. xviii. 2), and the grand soul went on alone upon his mission. But the lesson:—The teachers of obedience must be themselves obedient. The law-giver must himself be marked by obedience to law. There is nothing small or great in questions of fidelity. How could Moses thereafter take a stand for righteousness if not himself above indictment? Some moral defects may be absolutely fatal to moral strength. 3. *The meeting of the delivering allies*—of Moses and Aaron—not like that of Wellington and Blücher, after the battle, but before the campaign. The following points may be noted:—Aaron moved at a Divine intimation. The two met at Sinai. Moses communicated to his brother the revelation and conference connected with the burning bush. Had not told Jethro. With him no blatant speaking of the deepest mysteries of spiritual life.

III. EGYPT. Picture the familiarity of cities, monuments, and scenery, but the unfamiliar faces. No change, yet many changes. 1. *The assembling of the elders*. Moses, more wise than aforetime, knows that nothing can be done without the sympathy of the people. Can come into contact with them through the elders. This an argument for the organisation of the people. 2. *The prominence of Aaron*. At once takes his place. Note Moses' unfamiliarity now with Hebrew and Egyptian, after the lapse of so many years, as well as natural want of eloquence. 3. *The result*. Great success! Belief! Sensation at the coming down of the delivering God! Every head bowed! Worship! God had said: They will believe—"they shall hearken to thy voice." Moses: "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice." BUT THEY DID. Success even beyond our hopes, and the fulfilments of God beyond all our fears.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 24—26.—The transition is abrupt from the promise of triumph over Pharaoh to the threat of instant death. But we must bear in mind that some days may have elapsed between the two, and that the sin which provoked the menace was probably not committed at the date of the promise. The narrative of verses 24—26 is obscure from its brevity; but the

most probable explanation of the circumstances is, that Zipporah had been delivered of her second son, Eliezer, some few days before she set out on the journey to Egypt. Childbirth, it must be remembered, in the East does not incapacitate a person from exertion for more than a day or two. On the journey, the eighth day from the birth of the child arrived, and his

circumcision ought to have taken place; but Zipporah had a repugnance to the rite, and deferred it, Moses weakly consenting to the illegality. At the close of the eighth day, when Moses went to rest for the night, he was seized with a sudden and dangerous illness, which he regarded, and rightly regarded, as a God-inflicted punishment, sent to chastise his sin in breaking the Divine command (Gen. xvii. 10—12). Zipporah understood the matter in the same way; and, as her husband was too ill to perform the rite, she herself with her own hand cut off her boy's foreskin, and, still indignant at what she had been forced to do, cast it at her husband's feet, with the reproach—"Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." The rite once performed, however reluctantly, God remitted his anger, and allowed Moses to recover his health, and pursue his journey.

Ver. 24.—It came to pass by the way in the inn. "Inns," in our sense of the word, were unknown in the East for many ages after the time of Moses, and are still of very rare occurrence. Khans or caravanserais take their place. These are unfurnished buildings, open to all travellers, who thus obtain shelter *gratis*, but must provide themselves with food, bedding, and all other necessities. It is questioned, however, if even such a place as this is here meant. Probably, the *mālon* of Moses' time was a mere recognised halting-place, in the vicinity of a well, at which travellers were accustomed to pass the night. The Lord met him and sought to kill him. A sudden seizure, followed by a dangerous illness, is generally thought to be intended

(Knobel, Kalisch, Rosenmüller, Canon Cook); but the words seem more appropriate to a miraculous appearance, like that of the angel to Balaam (Num. xxii. 31). Still, it is quite possible that nothing more than an illness is meant.

Ver. 25.—Zipporah took a sharp stone. Literally "a stone." Stone knives were commonly used in Egypt for making the incisions necessary when bodies were embalmed, and were regarded as purer than iron or bronze ones. Joshua ordered the preparation of stone knives for the circumcision of those born in the wilderness (Josh. v. 2); and the Jews seem to have used stone for circumcision for many ages, though before the compilation of the Talmud they had changed their practice. Cast it at his feet. Not, certainly, the child's feet, but her husband's, to whom at the same moment she addresses herself. A bloody husband. Literally, "a bridegroom of blood." The words are clearly a reproach; and the gist of the reproach seems to be that Moses was a husband who cost her dear, causing the blood of her sons to be shed in order to keep up a national usage which she regarded as barbarous.

Ver. 26.—So he let him go. *I.e.* "God let Moses go"—allowed him to escape death, accepted Zipporah's tardy act as a removal of the cause of offence, and gave her husband back to her. Then she said, etc. This is not a second address of Zipporah to Moses, conceived in the same terms, but an explanation of her previous address. She called him "a bloody husband because of the circumcision." Literally, "of the circumcisions." The two circumcisions, of Gershom in Midian, and of Eliezer on the way to Egypt, are especially in the writer's mind.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 24—26. *One small duty neglected may frustrate the whole purpose of a life.* To an Israelite the circumcision of his male children on the eighth day was a plain practical duty, resting upon a positive precept, which was unambiguous and peremptory. (See Gen. xvii. 10—14.) Moses, probably in deference to the wishes of his wife, who disliked the custom, had allowed his son, Eliezer, to remain uncircumcised beyond the appointed time, perhaps making the excuse to himself that during a journey such a rite could not conveniently be performed, and intending that the thing should be done when they reached Egypt. But the precept was plain—"He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you;" and nothing had been said by God of any circumstances under which the rite might be deferred. It was the appointed means by which the child was to be brought into covenant with God; and if he died before the performance of the rite, he would die out of covenant, and so suffer a wrong. Moses probably thought that his sin was a little matter—perhaps hardly recognised it as a sin at all. But it was the "little rift within the lute" which destroyed the whole value of the instrument. He who "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all" (Jam. ii. 10). God thought the neglect no small matter, and would have punished it, had it not been repaired, with death. It can never be a small matter to neglect any command of God, be it to perform a rite, or to undergo one, or to keep a particular day holy, or any other.

When a positive command is admitted to have come from God, the obligation to obey it, as Bishop Butler observes, is moral. And so this little duty neglected, had nearly cost Moses his life, Zipporah her husband, the child his natural protector. Moses' death at this period would have left the whole purpose of his life unaccomplished, have handed over the deliverance of Israel to another, and have caused his special powers and special training to have been wasted. Let men beware, then, of the neglect of little duties, the allowance in themselves of "little sins." Let them beware especially of being led into such "little sins," by over-complaisance to a wife, a friend, a companion. Many a man would have stood firm, but for such seductive influence. A man who is truly manly will resist it, and risk the loss of human affection, secure of the Divine approval.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 19—29.—"*My times are in Thy hand.*" Moses thought himself fit for his work at forty—eager to undertake it before the years increased; God waits until his self-confidence has abated, and then, at eighty, gives him his commission.

I. THE GREAT COMMISSION. His errand is to Pharaoh, as an ambassador from the King of heaven to the king of Egypt. Notice—1. *His credentials.* As coming in a king's name he must be accredited by the king who sends him. God gives him signs, very simple but very significant. (1) The shepherd's rod, emblem of his office, turned into a serpent, emblem of his new dignity. (2) A hand made leprous and cleansed, emblem of a people degraded but to be redeemed. (3) A libation of water turned to blood, emblem of life smitten by judgment. The signs are simple—a rod, a hand, a cup of water; so are most of God's signs; yet by the way in which he uses them they accredit the messenger, and attest the authenticity of his message. 2. *His message* corresponds with the last two signs:—(1) A command. Israel in slavery is to be released. God will have his son free, the leprous cleansed. (2) A threat. If Pharaoh refuse, his son shall be slain; the joy of his life turned to blood. Such the commission given to Moses, and to fulfil which he starts for Egypt.

II. THE GREAT TRIAL: vers. 24—26. [*Illustration*:—A man about to enter into battle carefully selects his best weapon. Is it, however, really trustworthy?—has it no weak points? He must prove it that he may know. Proving *looks* like seeking to break; it is seeking to discover if breakage is possible.] God having selected Moses, must *prove* him before he uses him; so if the proof brings out weak points they may at any rate be remedied. "The Lord met him and sought to kill him." Two weak points were immediately discovered:—1. *A broken covenant.* He who is selected to represent the covenant people, is himself shown to be a covenant-breaker! His son uncircumcised!! If judgment must fall on Egypt it must begin at the house of God. Moses must himself be purified before he can be allowed to denounce Pharaoh. 2. *A refractory wife.* The secret of the broken covenant was clearly the wilful obstinacy of Zipporah. She is compelled to do through fear what she would not yield from love. A man's wife is meant for a help-meet; if not *that*, she may be his greatest hindrance. Let Zipporah return to Midian for the time (xviii. 2), and at least leave her husband unencumbered. So out of the trial God makes a way of escape; proves and reproves his servant that he may improve and approve him.

III. THE GREAT CONSOLATION: vers. 27, 28. God does not do, what kings and rulers too often do, treat his envoys as mere machines, forgetting their human needs and cravings. If Zipporah is no help-meet for Moses, he shall have a help-meet who will more than satisfy him. In Aaron he finds sympathy, ver. 27; to Aaron he can give his confidence, ver. 28. His own strength is doubled in the friendship of one who thus shares his burdens.

Application:—1. God gives us commissions, but they are always accompanied by credentials. You *say* God calls you to do this? Show then the signs of your calling. 2. God's envoys are not free from trials; rather, they are the more tried that they may be the more trustworthy. The Captain was perfected through suffering. 3. Whatever the commission, whatever the trial, God will empower us to fulfil the one and strengthen us to endure the other. One may well do without Zipporah when God sends him Aaron.—G.

Vers. 24—27.—*Interpretation of providence.* This mysterious passage in the life of Moses suggests various reflections. The facts are few. Moses, probably in deference to Zipporah's abhorrence of the rite, had neglected the circumcision of his child. This, in so eminent a servant of God, was a sin which could not be winked at. Least of all could it be overlooked at a time when the covenants were undergoing a species of resurrection, and when Moses was on his way to Egypt for the very purpose of giving effect to them. Hence this incident at the inn. Moses, apparently, was seized by an illness which threatened to be mortal, and a fatal result was only averted by Zipporah, who, at once divining the cause of the affliction, used a sharp stone, and performed the neglected rite. Thus was Moses taught that he who represents God before men must himself be blameless—guiltless of gross neglect of Divine commandments; taught also that service of God must be whole-hearted—that in the way of duty there is to be no conferring with flesh and blood—no pleasing of men at the cost of unfaithfulness to God. "He that loveth father or mother," etc. (Matt. x. 37). Besides these general lessons we draw from the incident such instruction as the following:—

I. GOD OFTEN TEACHES US THAT HE IS ANGRY WITH US BY VISITING US WITH AFFLICTIVE DISPENSATIONS, LEAVING US TO FIND OUT THE CAUSE. Even Moses, with whom God had so often spoken, received on this occasion no other warning of his displeasure than this severe illness which so unexpectedly overtook him. Huxley remarks on Nature's system of education—"Nature's discipline is not even a word and a blow, and the blow first; but the blow without the word. It is left to you to find out why your ears are boxed." The words apply as fitly to the relation of outward providences to moral and spiritual conditions—a class of relations which this writer would reject, but which nevertheless exist.

II. CONSCIENCE, REMINDING US OF NEGLECTED DUTIES, OR OTHER SINS COMMITTED BY US, IS A READY INTERPRETER OF MANY OF GOD'S AFFLICTIVE PROVIDENCES. Zipporah guessed at once the cause of this trouble, and the result showed her guess to be correct. So Joseph's brethren (Gen. xlii. 21).

III. THE HOLIEST OF GOD'S SERVANTS ARE NOT EXEMPTED FROM SEVERE CHASTISEMENTS. We may wonder that God should have chosen this particular time to put a valuable life in peril. It was, however, the summons to depart which brought matters to a crisis. Moses was not ignorant of this neglected duty, and to set out on so grave a mission, and leave it still neglected, was a sin calling for sharp rebuke. This is another illustration of the truth that God punishes sins in his own children with even greater severity than he does the like sins in others. Do we ask, What if Moses had died? The question is needless. The Divine arrangements had all the facts in contemplation from the first. Had it been foreseen that the anticipated effect would not have followed from the stroke—that the trouble would have had a different ending—everything else would have been different to suit. Yet we may not doubt that Moses' life was for the time really in peril, and that, had repentance not supervened, God would not have receded, even at the cost of a Moses, from inflicting upon him the extreme penalty of his unfaithfulness.

IV. TRUE REPENTANCE INCLUDES REPARATION FOR WRONG, AND WHERE THAT IS POSSIBLE, PERFORMANCE OF NEGLECTED DUTIES. Exemplified in Zipporah.

V. GOD IS ZEALOUS FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF HIS OWN ORDINANCES. It might be pleaded, this is only a ceremony, an outward rite; what great importance is to be attached to it? But God had commanded it, and had even made it the badge of his covenant; therefore neglect of it was an act of disobedience, and implied a low esteem of covenant-privilege. The sacraments may be unduly and foolishly exalted; but there is an opposite sin of disesteeming and neglecting them.—J. O.

Vers. 24—26.—*Neglect of the covenant on its human side.* In Gen. xvii. we find the covenant between God and Abram stated with great particularity and emphasis. On God's side there were large promises to Abram of an abundant posterity and an everlasting possession, and on man's side there was to be the faithful and regular practice of circumcision. Moses was going to Egypt now in virtue of this very covenant, and as the agent of God to advance it considerably towards its full effect; and yet, strange to say, he had with him an uncircumcised son. No wonder that God visited him by the way, and—when we look into all the probabilities of the case—no wonder that God

made as if he would kill him. The very obscurities of this strange incident help to make it more impressive and admonitory. Consider—

I. WHAT THERE MAY BE IN THE NARRATIVE TO THROW LIGHT ON THE CAUSE OF THE OMISSION. *It cannot have been that Moses was completely ignorant of God's requirement.* Had not God recalled the covenant to the particular attention of Moses? He had done so in a sufficiently suggestive way, not by repeating the terms of the covenant in full, but simply by referring to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Having thus been reminded of the covenant, Moses was bound to make himself correctly acquainted with every provision and detail of it. This covenant had been delivered to Abram once for all, and was of such a kind that nothing but the most flagrant neglect could allow the sign of it on its human side to fall into disuse. It was a covenant written in the very body of every true Israelite. Doubtless Moses himself had been circumcised; yet here he is, going as the messenger of God to make progress in fulfilling God's part of the covenant, and yet his own part, as a member of Israel, he is unmistakably neglecting. Hence we see that he could not have been ignorant; and more than that, *neither could he have been forgetful.* We are led to infer that *easy-going compliance with his Midianite wife, Zipporah*, was at the bottom of this neglected duty. It would appear indeed as if Moses had circumcised one son and then left the other uncircumcised. If so, he had shown gross inconsistency. More might have been said for him if both had been uncircumcised. Probably Zipporah, having seen the pain of her firstborn, had struggled and pleaded only too successfully for exemption in the case of the second.

II. THE EXTREMELY MENACING MODE BY WHICH GOD BRINGS MOSES TO A SENSE OF THE OMISSION. "He sought to kill him." When God proceeds to such an extremity as this, it must be either because of some monstrous breach of duty, or to impress an important commandment by the most efficacious means that can be adopted. There is no need to suppose that Moses, knowing full well the importance of circumcision, yet deliberately omitted it. If so, his conduct would have been very bad indeed. There is a more reasonable and instructive aspect. He was brought nigh to death so that he might learn the truth—and learn it so as never to forget, never to neglect it—that no human being, whatever its claims and whatever its supplications, was to come between God and him. Let Moses now take his choice between pleasing his wife and obeying his God. He could only do God's work by the most hearty obedience and attention. Nor was he here only as the messenger of God to Israel and Egypt; he was also the responsible head of a household. Leaders who are husbands and parents are watched in all their home relations. If Moses was going to let Zipporah rule and prevail by her womanly wiles in one instance, why not in others? The only way to keep things right was for Zipporah to take her orders from him, and as Moses was to choose between his wife and his God, so Zipporah between her husband and her child. She has to put her child to a passing pain in order that she may spare her husband from impending death. Indeed, poor woman, she had been greatly tried of late: compelled to leave her father and her dear native land, and go on an expedition the reasons of which would be but indifferently comprehended by her. Whichever way she turns, and whatever she does, there is something to vex her soul. Dearly had she paid for that chivalrous service which Moses had rendered her and her sisters so many years before. The awkwardness of being unequally yoked is felt by the unbeliever as much as the believer.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 27, 28.—The scene suddenly shifts. Moses is left in the wilderness to recover his strength and make such arrangements with respect to his wife and children as he thinks best under the circumstances. We are carried away to Egypt and introduced to Aaron, Moses' elder brother, of whom we have only heard previously that he could "speak well,"

and was to assist Moses as spokesman in his enterprise (ch. iv. 14–16). We now find God revealing himself to Aaron also, and directing his movements, as he had those of Moses. Aaron had perhaps already formed the design of visiting his brother (see ver. 14), and would have sought him in Midian but for the direction now given him. That

direction was probably more definite than is expressed in the text, and enabled him to set forth confidently, without the fear of missing his brother. At any rate, under God's guidance he went and met him in the Sinaitic district. The joy of meeting is briefly described in the single phrase "he kissed him." The meeting was followed by a full explanation, on the part of Moses, both of the nature of his own mission and of the part which Aaron was to take in it.

Ver. 27.—Go into the wilderness. It is scarcely possible that this can have been the whole of the direction given, since the wilderness extended from the shores of the Mediterranean to the extreme point of the Sinaitic peninsula. The sacred writers study brevity, and leave much to be supplied by the common-sense of the reader. He went and met him in the mount of God. Compare above,

ch. iii. 1, which shows that Horeb is meant. Horeb seems to have been the name for the entire mountain region, of which Sinai was a part. Kissed him. So Esau kissed Jacob after their long separation (Gen. xxxiii. 4), and Joseph, Benjamin and his other brethren (ib. xiv. 14, 15). In the East men are more demonstrative than with us. Aaron's kiss showed the gladness that was in his heart (*supra*, ver. 14).

Ver. 28.—Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord. Perfect confidence between the two brothers was absolutely necessary for the success of their enterprise; and Moses wisely, at their very first interview, made Aaron acquainted with the entire series of Divine revelations that had been made to him, keeping nothing back, but communicating to him "all the words of the Lord." Who had sent him. Rather, "which he had laid upon him." (So the LXX., the Vulgate, Knobel, Kalisch, and others.) All the signs. Compare verses 3—9 and verse 23.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 27.—*God does not stint his help when he visits man.* It might have seemed that God had now done enough to set on foot the deliverance of his people. He had appeared to Moses, overcome his reluctance to be leader, given him the power of working some great miracles, and allowed him to devolve a portion of his duties upon his brother; Moses was on his way to Egypt to carry out his commission, and Aaron was minded to go forth to meet and greet him. Humanly speaking, nothing more was needed for the initiation of the work. But God, who "seeth not as man seeth," does not stint his arm when he has taken a business in hand. It would expedite matters if Aaron were to be directed where to meet Moses, and the two brothers were to have their conference at once, and arrange their course of proceedings. So Aaron is visited, probably by an angel, and sent to meet Moses, and told where he will find him; and by these means the meeting is brought about with all speed, Aaron enlightened as to his duties, and plans arranged to be put in act as soon as Egypt is reached. The two brothers gain the advantage of sweet companionship some days or weeks earlier than they would have done if left to themselves, and their first interview with Pharaoh is advanced correspondingly. And as with his miraculous, so with his ordinary help. God does not stint it. His grace is ever sufficient for men. He gives them all that they can possibly need, and more than they would ever think of asking. He loves to pour out his blessings abundantly on those that are true to him; makes "all things work together for their good;" goes out of his way to procure advantages for them; loads them with his favours.

Ver. 28.—*Full confidence necessary between fellow-workers.* Moses told Aaron "all the words of the Lord"—made "a clean breast" to him, kept back none of the counsel of God, so far as he had been made acquainted with it. A kind, a loving, and a prudent course. Half-confidences are valueless; they irritate rather than satisfy. If known to be half-confidences, they offend; if mistaken for full ones, they mislead and conduct to disaster. Those who are to be fellow-workers in any undertaking—more especially any great one—should have entire confidence each in each, and be wholly unreserved one towards the other. There is good sense and good advice in the motto, "Trust me not at all or all in all."

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 29—31.—Moses seems to have parted with Zipporah and his children in Horeb, and to have sent them back to Jethro (ch. xviii. 2), perhaps because they might have interfered with the work which he had to do, perhaps because he thought Egypt would be no pleasant residence for them during the coming struggle. He journeyed onward from Horeb with Aaron for his sole companion, and had abundant time for taking counsel with him, and exercising the influence over him which high intellect and education combined will always give to their possessor. The journey from Horeb to Goshen occupied probably some weeks. On arriving in Goshen, the two brothers, in obedience to the divine command (ch. iii. 16), proceeded at once to "gather together all the elders of Israel"—that is, all those who exercised local authority over their countrymen in the various districts which they inhabited. Through the mouth of Aaron, Moses declared all that had been revealed to him at the burning bush and subsequently, exhibiting at the same time the credentials which proved him an ambassador from God, *i.e.* the three miracles which he had been empowered to work at any moment (ch. iv. 2—8). The elders, being themselves convinced, summoned an assembly of the people, as is implied though not expressed in ver. 30; and the people, having heard the words of Aaron and seen the signs, were also convinced, and bowing their heads, worshipped the God whose ambassadors had appeared before them.

Ver. 29.—On the elders of Israel, see note upon ch. iii. 16. It is clear that the Israelitish nation, though in bondage to the Egyptians, had a certain internal organisation of its own, and possessed a set of native officers. These were probably the hereditary heads of families. Moses and Aaron could have no authority to gather these persons together; but they issued an invitation, and it was accepted. The "elders" came to the meeting.

Ver. 30.—Aaron spake. Aaron at once

entered on his office of "spokesman" (ver. 16), declaring to the elders all God's dealings with his brother. Aaron also, and not Moses, as we should have expected (ver. 17), did the signs, God, by allowing him to do them, sanctioning this delegation of power. On later occasions, we find Aaron more than once required by God to work the miracles. (See below, ch. vii. 19; viii. 5, 16.) In the sight of the people. It is not probable that the people were present at the first meeting of the elders; but the sacred historian, anxious to compress his narrative, and bent simply on conveying to us the fact of Aaron's success with both elders and people, omits stages in the history which he supposes that any reader can supply, *e.g.* the doing of the signs in the sight of the elders, their belief in them, and their subsequent assembling of the people.

Ver. 31.—The people believed. This ready faith stands in strong contrast with the ordinary incredulous temper of the Israelitish people, who were "a faithless and stubborn generation"—a generation that "believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation" (Ps. lxxviii. 22). It would seem that under the pressure of affliction—having, humanly speaking, no hope—the stubborn spirit of the people had given way, and they were content to look to Jehovah and accept his promises, and believe in his messengers, notwithstanding their natural scepticism. No doubt the novelty of miracles helped to produce this state of feeling; and the fact that they were not called upon at present for any active exertion made acquiescence in what Moses put before them easier. When they heard that the Lord had visited—*i.e.* when the message contained in ch. iii. 16 was delivered to them. And that he had looked upon their affliction. Compare ch. iii. 7. They bowed their heads. Rather "they bowed down" (Kalisch), or "inclined themselves." And worshipped. Some understand an act of respect and homage done to Moses and Aaron, in token of their acceptance by the people as leaders; but, though the words employed are sometimes used in this sense, the context is opposed to their having this sense in this place. "When the people heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, . . . they bowed down and worshipped." Whom? Surely, the Lord

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 29—31.—*The blessing on obedience.* Moses and Aaron, on their return to Egypt in company, carried out exactly the Divine directions, doing neither less nor more. They summoned the elders as commanded (ch. iii. 16); they delivered God's message to them (*ib.*); they wrought the signs which they had been told to work (ch. iv. 17); they severally kept to their appointed offices; and the result was complete

success so far. The elders and people hearkened unto them, believed, gave in their unqualified assent and consent to all that was put before them. And this was according to the promise of God, "they shall hearken to thy voice" (ch. iii. 18). Moses had disbelieved the promise, and exclaimed, "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice" (ch. iv. 1); but Moses was now proved mistaken. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor. i. 25). God knew better than Moses; he was faithful; he kept his word. As Moses and Aaron had been true to him, and followed exactly his commands, so he proved himself true to them, and amply rewarded their obedience. Moses and Aaron were from this time the accepted leaders of the nation.

Ver. 31.—*Worship the proper outcome of thankfulness.* Israel, down-trodden, oppressed, crushed beneath an intolerable tyranny, no sooner hears the promise of deliverance, than it displays its gratitude by "bowing the head and worshipping." Many Christians talk of being thankful for God's blessings vouchsafed to them, but never think of showing forth their thankfulness by any extra act of worship, or even any increased intensity in that portion of their ordinary worship which consists in thanksgiving. A sad sign this of modern lukewarmness, an indication that the "last times" are drawing near, when "the love of many shall wax cold." Time was when each national success was at once celebrated by a "Te Deum," and when each blessing granted to an individual drew forth a special offering. The thankfulness that does not show itself in some such overt act must be a very poor thankfulness, a very weak and washed-out feeling.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 27, 28.—*A meeting of brothers.* 1. By Divine appointment (cf. ver. 14). 2. In a sacred place. 3. As co-operators in a good work. 4. With affection. 5. To exchange experiences.—J. O.

Vers. 29—31.—*Preaching and faith.* I. THE WORD SPOKEN. 1. Should be the Word of God. The preacher is not set to deliver his own speculations, but to convey a message. 2. Should be exhibited with its appropriate evidence. 3. Should be declared to all.

II. THE WORD BELIEVED. The people—1. Appreciated the value of the word. 2. Believed the word. 3. Worshipped; a token of gratitude, submission, and obedience.—J. O.

SECTION III.—CHAPTER V.

FIRST APPEAL OF MOSES TO PHARAOH, AND INCREASE OF THE OPPRESSION.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V

Vers. 1—5.—Having secured the adhesion of the Israelitish people, Moses and Aaron sought an interview with the Egyptian monarch who was now in possession of the throne. According to the bulk of modern authorities, and according to our own views of Egyptian history, this was Menephtah, the son and successor of Rameses II. Menephtah was a weak prince, whom events had favoured, and who had been thus led to have an exalted opinion of himself. A great invasion of Egypt had occurred at the

beginning of his reign, which had been met and completely repulsed, not by his own skill or valour, but by the skill and valour of his generals. Menephtah himself had pointedly avoided incurring any danger. He claimed to be in direct communication with the Egyptian gods, who revealed themselves to him in visions, and pleaded a distinct command of Phthah as preventing him from putting himself at the head of his army. Still, he counted as his own all the successes gained by his generals, and was as vainglorious and arrogant as if he had himself performed prodigies.

of valour. Such was the temper of the king before whom we believe that Moses and Aaron appeared. There would be no difficulty in any Egyptian subject, who had a prayer to make or a petition to present, obtaining an audience of the monarch, for it was an accepted principle of the administration that the kings were to hear all complaints, and admit to their presence all classes of the community.

Ver. 1.—And afterward. The interposition of some not inconsiderable space of time seems to be implied. Menepthah resided partly at Memphis, partly at Zoan (Tanis). Moses and Aaron may have had to wait until he returned from his southern to his northern capital. Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh. Aaron was, no doubt, the sole spokesman, but as he spoke for both, the plural is used. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. Literally, "Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel." Pharaoh would understand Jehovah to be a proper name, parallel to his own Phthah, Ra, Ammon, etc. Let my people go. The rationale of the demand is given in ch. viii. 26. The Israelites could not offer their proper sacrificial animals in the presence of the Egyptians without the risk of provoking a burst of religious animosity, since among the animals would necessarily be some which all, or many, of the Egyptians regarded as sacred, and under no circumstances to be killed. The fanaticism of the Egyptians on such occasions led to wars, tumults, and massacres. (See Plutarch, 'De Isid. et Osir.', § 44.) To avoid this danger the "feast" must be held beyond the bounds of Egypt—in the adjacent "wilderness."

Ver. 2.—And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord? Rather, "Who is Jehovah?" Either Pharaoh is actually ignorant, or he pretends to be. The former is possible, since Jehovah was a name but little employed, until the return of Moses to Egypt. The latter, however, is more probable. That I should obey his voice. Why am I to obey his voice? What is your Jehovah to me? What authority has he over me? He is, at best, your god, not mine. I know not Jehovah. I acknowledge him not. He is not within the range of my Pantheon.

Neither will I let Israel go, &c. "nor even, if he were, would I consent to such a request as this from him." The Pharaohs assumed to be themselves gods, on a par with the national gods, and not bound to obey them.

Ver. 3.—And they said. Moses and Aaron are not abashed by a single refusal. They expostulate, and urge fresh reasons why Pharaoh should accede to their request. But first they explain that Jehovah is the God of the Hebrews, by which name the Israelites seem to have been generally known to the Egyptians. (See ch. i. 15, 16, 19; ii. 6, 7.) Their God, they say, has met with them—made, that is, a special revelation of himself to them—an idea quite familiar to the king, and which he could not pretend to misunderstand and he has laid on them an express command. They are to go a three days' journey into the desert—to be quite clear of interruption from the Egyptians. Will not Pharaoh allow them to obey the order? If they do not obey it, their God will be angry, and will punish them, either by sending a pestilence among them, or causing an invader to fall upon them with the sword. The eastern frontier of Egypt was at this time very open to invasion, and was actually threatened by a vast army some ten or fifteen years later (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii., pp. 147—9).

Ver. 4.—The king makes no direct reply to this appeal, but turns upon his petitioners, and charges them with an offence against the crown. Why do they, Moses and Aaron, by summoning the people to meet together, and exciting their minds with vague hopes, "let the people from their works." This is damage to the crown, whose labourers the people are, and he, the Pharaoh, will not have it. "Get you—all of you, people and leaders together—to your appointed tasks—your burdens."

Ver. 5.—The people are many. This is added as an aggravation of the offence charged in the last verse. The people are numerous. Therefore the greater damage is done to the crown by putting a stop to their labours. With these words the first interview between the Israelite leaders and the Egyptian monarch ends. Moses and Aaron, we must suppose, retired discomfited from the royal presence.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*God's will often opposed by the great of the earth, and his servants rebuffed.* Encouraged by their success with the elders and with the people (ch. iv. 29—31), Moses and Aaron would step boldly into the presence of Pharaoh. It was, no doubt, known that they represented the feelings of an entire nation, a nation moreover of whom the Egyptians had begun to be afraid (ch. i. 9, 10). The courtiers would treat them, at any rate, with outward politeness and respect. They knew also that God was on their side, and would ultimately, if not at the first, give them success. Under these circumstances they made their request boldly and with much plainness (vers. 1 and 3). But they were met with the most complete antagonism. Pharaoh was in his own eyes not only the greatest king upon the face of the earth, but an actual

god. If we are right in supposing him to be Menephtah, he was the son of a king who had set up his own image to be worshipped side by side with those of Ammon, Phthah, and Horus, three of the greatest Egyptian deities. He viewed the demand made of him as preposterous, and had probably not the slightest belief in the power of Jehovah to do him harm. Who was Jehovah? and what had he to fear from him? A god—if he was a god—who had not been able to prevent his people from becoming a nation of slaves. He therefore treated the petition of Moses with absolute contempt. And so it has ever been, and will ever be, with the great of the earth. They are so exalted above their fellows, that they think “no harm can happen unto them.” They do not set themselves to inquire what is really God’s will, but determinately carry out their own will in their own way. Even when they do not openly blaspheme, like this Pharaoh, and Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 29—35), and Herod Antipas (Luke xxiii. 11), they ignore God, reject the just demands of his ministers, refuse to be guided by their advice. Thus his servants are ever being rebuffed. They ask that slavery should everywhere cease, and are told that in some places it is a necessity. They plead against the licensing of vice, and are bidden not to interfere with sanitary arrangements. They ask for laws to restrain intoxication, and are denounced as seeking to lessen the national revenue. They cry for the abolition of vivisection, and are held up to ridicule as sickly sentimentalists. All this is to be expected, and should not discourage them. Let them, like Moses and Aaron, continually repeat their demands; urge them, in season and out of season. They may be sure that they will triumph at last. “The Lord is on their side;” they need not fear what flesh can do against them.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Failure*. “I know not Jehovah,” etc.: *Exod. v. 2*. We now come face to face with the king. As the king here becomes very prominent, we will keep him conspicuous in the outlining of this address.

1. AUDIENCE WITH THE KING. This is a convenient moment for introducing Pharaoh as the terrestrial representative of the Sun, as the vicegerent of Deity upon earth. Does it seem wonderful that men should receive a man in this capacity? But millions of professed Christians in this nineteenth century so receive the Pope. We will take the suggestions of the story in the time-order of the narrative. We have—1. *A lesson in courage*. The two went to their audience with the king at the peril of their lives. Some might have remembered Moses. Their demand touched the honour and revenues of the king. Courage in facing responsibility is the lesson; leave consequences to our poor selves to God. 2. *A suggestion as to the method of evangelic grace*. Jehovah here calls himself for the first time in relation to the nation, as distinguished from the man Jacob, “the God of Israel.” A crowd was just becoming a State and a Church, when Jehovah calls himself their God. First he is their God: then all possibilities are before them. Their history begins well. So now: first adopted children, and then the obedience of children. 3. *A warning against want of catholicity*. The tone of Pharaoh is that of the vicegerent of Deity, as against a tutelary god he deigned not to acknowledge. But he was wrong even on the principles of enlightened pagandom, which was forward to acknowledge the gods of all nations. Compare the policy of imperial Rome. 4. *Teaching as to gradation in God’s demands*. Here may be discussed the nature and propriety of the first demand for three days’ absence. Looking at things after the events, it may appear to some that here was a demand which concealed the real intention, viz. to return no more. But this would be to impeach the veracity of God! The demand really was for “a whole day’s prayer-meeting,” with a day to go, a day to return. In the desert, as in consideration of Egyptian feeling; but probably within the frontier, for there were Egyptian garrisons in parts of the desert of Sinai. A moderate demand! One that Pharaoh might well have complied with. Compliance might have led to further negotiation; and this Pharaoh might have stood out in history as co-operating in the deliverance and formation of the Church of God. Instead of that he set himself against the small demand, and was unready for the greater (*Exod. vi. 11*) when it came. And so we see him through the mist of ages, “moving ghost-like to his doom.” It is a picture of the method of God. He asks first for the simple, reasonable, easy etc. etc.

II. ORDERS FROM THE KING. "The very same day!" Such is the restlessness of the tyrant-spirit. The orders were addressed to the "drivers," Egyptians, and to the "clerks" of the works, Hebrews. Note the large employment of "clerks," as evidenced by the monuments. The appointment of these "clerks" would contribute much to the organisation of Israel, and so prepare for the Exodus. As to the orders—explain them. Bricks a government monopoly; witness the royal mark on many to this day. Same number of bricks as before, but people to gather in the corn-fields the straw (in harvest only the ear cut off) previously allowed by the government, chop it, and mix it with the clay. Terrible cruelty of these orders-in-council in such a climate.

III. Obedience to the king. For the sake of vividly and pictorially bringing up the condition of the people, note the time of straw-collecting: time of harvest—end of April; then a hot pestilential sand-wind often blows over the land of Egypt for fifty days; the effects on health, tone, skin, eyes (in the land of ophthalmia), of so working in blazing sun, in clouds of dust, in hopeless slavery. They return to the horrid brickfields; fail; fierce punishments, as to this day in the same land.

IV. EXPOSTULATION WITH THE KING. The "clerks" of the works constitute a deputation to the king, perhaps by virtue of a "right of petition." The king accuses them of being "idle." To understand this, think of the gigantic public works, the terrific labour, the perishing of thousands, the likelihood that such a taunt would spring to tyrannical lips. The king refuses, perhaps threatens the lives of the "clerks." See ver. 21—"to put a sword," etc. Here again, that which seemed most against the people made for them. The treatment of the "clerks" brought them into sympathy with their enslaved brethren. Israel closed its ranks. The fellowship of suffering prepared for the companionship of pilgrimage. There was, too, a present blessing. Spiritual feelings were quickened, heaven came nearer, the pitying love of God became more precious. One can imagine such scenes as those in which the slaves of the Southern States, through horrid swamps and over mighty rivers, in the dead of night "stole away to Jesus."

"In that hour, when night is calmest,
Sing they from some Sacred Psalmist,
In a voice so sweet and clear
That I cannot choose but hear.

"And the voice of their devotion
Fills my soul with strange emotion;
For its tones by turns are glad,
Sweetly solemn, wildly sad."

[Adapted from LONGFELLOW.]

V. CONSEQUENCES TO THE AMBASSADORS OF THE KING OF KINGS. Moses and Aaron, somewhere near the palace, were waiting to know the result of the audience of the "clerks" with the king. The "clerks," irritated and angry, turned on the God-given leaders: ver. 21. [Note in the Heb. the expression "to stink in the eyes," and the fact that pungent odours do affect the eyes.] A dreadful trouble to Moses and Aaron!

In conclusion, observe—1. *The cruelty that is ever incident to sin.* "Man's inhumanity to man" a universal fact. "The dark places of the earth are full," etc.; so places alight with modern civilisation. The incidents of any gin-palace! There is, too, a cruelty of word and manner. Soul-wounds deeper than sword-gashes. No cure save under the sanctifying power of the Cross of self-abnegating love. 2. *The pain that attends all emancipations.* The first efforts of Moses and Aaron led to nothing but disaster. See vi. 9. So with the agony of emancipation in America. So always and everywhere. So with reforms within the Church. So with crises of soul-history. 3. *The discouragement that may fill to leaders.* 4. *The encouragement we all have.* Note here—(1) The appointment of the "clerks;" (2) The personal danger into which they came; (3) The uniting all Israel into a fellowship of grief that they might dare the desert. All this came out of the oppression; but tended to salvation. Our darkest experiences may be our best friends. 5. *Through what sorrow all come to the final emancipation.*—R.

Chap. V.—The people of Jehovah detained and oppressed by the representative of the

prince of this world; no doubt as to the strength of the latter—is it possible for his spoils to be wrested from him? The strong man armed has thus far kept his palace (Luke xi. 21), and his goods (cf. Rev. xviii. 13) have been in peace, so far as outward disturbance is concerned. Now comes one who claims to be the stronger. What may be expected to happen?

I. THE CHALLENGE DELIVERED. 1. *The tyrant.* Picture the king. Wholly self-satisfied, worshipped as a god, absolute ruler over the lives of thousands. Surrounded by obsequious servants—none to contradict him, none to disobey. Enthroned in palace. Enter—2. *The envoys.* Two men—one grown old in slavery, one for forty years a shepherd, looking now at all this pomp as a man who dimly recalls some dream. Does he think of what might have been, perhaps he himself seated upon the throne (cf. Heb. xi. 24)? Greater honour to be the unknown envoy of Jehovah than to be the Pharaoh who receives his message. 3. *The message.* Strange words for such a king to hear (1) a *command*, not a *request*. The sender of the message speaks as to a servant. (2) The slaves of Pharaoh claimed as the people of Jehovah; his right denied to the possession of his goods. 4. *The reply.* The demand met by a contemptuous refusal. Who is Jehovah? I know not Jehovah! If the message is authoritative, yet the envoys are sufficiently humble—they even plead with him that, for the sake of the people, he will grant them permission and opportunity to sacrifice (ver. 3). All to no purpose; the strong man is secure in his possessions and means to keep them in his grasp.

II. HOSTILITIES COMMENCED. Pharaoh was not quite so indifferent as he seemed. If there is to be war, he will gain such advantage as may be gained by making the first hostile movement. His slaves at any rate shall be taught that rebellion is not likely to be successful. Effect of his policy:—1. *On people.* So long as he had been undisturbed his goods were in peace; now that he is disturbed the miserable peace of his chattels is disturbed too. [Man in prison, treated with greater rigour on the rumour of an attempted rescue.] Early spring, just after the corn has been cut; chopped straw needed to mix with the clay in brickmaking; let these discontented rebels gather their own. Israelites obliged to scatter themselves over the country; all complaints stifled with blows. Result, vers. 20, 21, great discouragement and distrust of Moses and Aaron. "This comes of interfering." Six months' worse tyranny than ever. 2. *On himself.* Six months to realise the success of his policy; feels more secure than ever; heart is harder; pride greater (cf. Rom. ii. 4, 5). 3. *On Moses.* Vers. 22, 23. Disheartened, but only for a little; repulsed by Pharaoh, suspected by the people, he is driven back on God; like the giant who gained strength each time he clasped the ground, so becoming more invincible with each new overthrow, finds God his *refuge* and his *strength* also. God is pledged to secure final victory. The slaves *must* be freed; not because *they* can win freedom, but because *God* has promised to free them. *Apply*, from our Lord's parable, Luke xi. 21, 22. Satan the strong man who has many slaves. His power seems at first to increase when moved by the rumour of redemption *we* attempt to follow the dictates of our Deliverer (cf. Rom. vii. 9-11). Content with slavery, there is quietude; trying after freedom we find trouble and affliction. [*Illustr.* A habit, not hard to *endure*, but hard to *break*. The chain of sin is easy to wear; they only know how fast it holds who try to struggle free of it.] Cf. again Rom. vii. with St. Paul as with Israel; the bondage seemed worse than ever when the hope of freedom was the most alluring. In either case the ground of hope, not *in* the sufferer, but away outside him. God prompts to the struggle against the oppressor, but he does not let victory depend on us; *that* rests with him. The promise to deliver is contained in the call to freedom. It is not, "I will help you when you are strong," nothing said about *our* strength at all; confidence rests on the fact that God is Jehovah, the *changeless* One (cf. Ex. vi. 2; Mal. iii. 6). Let Israel obey Moses, and God *must* redeem them from Pharaoh. Let us obey Christ, and God *must* redeem us from the power of Satan.—G.

Vers. 1-4.—*A first interview.* Accompanied by Aaron, Moses passes again through the halls of the Pharaohs from which he has been so long a stranger. Kings, courtiers, and people are different; but all else—gates and pillars, courts, corridors, and reception-rooms—how unchanged since first he knew them! The feelings of the *quondam prince*

must have been strangely mingled, as, after forty years of exile, he trod the familiar pavements, and looked upon the old splendours. But the narrative, absorbed in its mightier theme, has no word to spare for the emotions of a Moses. The long contest between Pharaoh and Jehovah is on the eve of its commencement, and the interest centres in its opening scene. It is this which occupies the verses before us.

I. THE REQUEST (vers. 1, 3). Behold Pharaoh on his throne of state, while the brothers stand before him delivering Jehovah's message. The request preferred to him was—1. *Eminently righteous and reasonable*. No monarch has a right to deprive a people of the opportunity of worshipping God according to their consciences. If he does, the people have a right to protest against it. Pharaoh could not be expected to understand the modern views of rights of conscience, but even by the light of his own time people were entitled to be permitted to worship their own gods, and to honour them by appropriate festivals. But not only had Pharaoh deprived the Hebrews of their liberty, and ground them to the earth by cruel oppression—both offences against righteousness, but he had taken from them, we may be certain, the opportunity of observing in a proper manner the festivals of their God. Moses and Aaron would have been within their rights, even without Divine command, had they demanded that the whole nation be set at liberty. Much more when they only asked that they be allowed for a brief space to retire into the wilderness, there, unmolested by the Egyptians, to sacrifice to the Lord. 2. *Supported by Divine command*. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." Pharaoh, it is true, could plead that he did not know Jehovah; but when he saw these men's sincerity, and how they dreaded incurring their God's anger (ver. 3), it was his duty to have inquired further. The evil was that he did not care to know. He treated the whole matter with impious and disdainful contempt. 3. *Unaccompanied by signs*. Moses and Aaron had no occasion to exhibit signs. Pharaoh was not in a mood to pay the slightest attention to them. He did not even dispute that this was a *bona fide* message from Jehovah, but took the ground of simple refusal to obey it. Yet there may have been a reason for working no miracles at the opening of the conflict. God proceeds with men step by step. The first appeal is to be made, not to the king's fears, but to his sense of fairness, his humanity, and feeling of religion. He must be convicted on this lower ground before sterner measures are used to coerce him to submission. It might be true that purely moral considerations would have little effect upon him; but if so, this had to be made manifest. God deals with men first of all in the open court of conscience, and it is there—in the region of ordinary morals—that hardening usually begins.

II. PHARAOH'S REPLY (ver. 2). It was, as already stated, a haughty and angry refusal, showing total disregard of the rights and wishes of the Hebrews, and setting Jehovah at defiance. The king's disposition, as brought to light in it, is seen to be—1. *Proud*. He probably regarded the request of the brothers as an instance of astounding audacity. Who were they, two slave-born men, that they should presume to ask from him, the lord of mighty Egypt, that the people be allowed to rest from their labours? His pride may have blinded him to the righteousness of their demand; but it could not lessen his responsibility. We are judged, not according to the impression which righteous and merciful appeals make upon us—that may be *nil*—but by the inherent righteousness of the appeals, and by the effects which they *ought* to have produced. 2. *Headstrong*. Before venturing so defiantly to scout Jehovah and his message, it would surely have been well for Pharaoh to have inquired a little further into the character and powers of this Being of whom the Hebrews stood so much in awe. He had not the excuse which many moderns would plead, that he did not believe in gods or in the supernatural in any shape. Pharaoh had no right, from his own point of view, to scout the possibility of "the God of the Hebrews" having met with them; and neither, so far as appears from the narrative, did he, though he chose to regard the story as a fiction. Many reject the Gospel, never having given its claims their serious attention; but this will not excuse them. They cannot plead that, had they believed it to be true, they would have acted otherwise. Their sin is that in their headstrongness they will not trouble themselves to inquire whether it is true. 3. *Profane*. After all, what Pharaoh's reply amounted to was this, that, let Jehovah be who or what he might, he (Pharaoh) set him at naught—would not obey him. The message might or might not come from a God, he did not care. Thus he "set his mouth against the heavens" (Ps. lxxiii. 9), and "exalted himself above all that is called God"

(2 Thess. ii. 4)—not an uncommon phase of pride. But the presumptuously wicked will do well to remember that, if Pharaoh thus exalted himself, it was to his own destruction. His very pride was a challenge to Jehovah to destroy him.—J. O.

Vers. 1-5.—God's demand and Pharaoh's answer.—1. THE DEMAND. 1. Its modesty. They merely ask liberty to depart on a three days' journey into the wilderness. 2. It was asked in good faith; it was not a cover for escape. God would give deliverance; but that was left in God's hand; and meanwhile they asked only for liberty to worship him. 3. Its reasonableness; they could not sacrifice the sacred animals of the Egyptians before their faces. 4. Its necessity. Pharaoh might not know Jehovah, but they knew him, and must serve him, "lest he fall upon us with the pestilence or the sword." The demand of the Church still is liberty to serve God in his own appointed way. It must be had. Luther's "God help me; I can do no other!" "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29).

II. THE REFUSAL. 1. Its presumption. He did not know Jehovah, and therefore the message was a lie! Unbelief makes the bounds of its knowledge the bounds of truth and possibility. The pretensions of modern agnosticism. 2. It was a refusal of justice; it was a resolve to continue oppression. Unbelief is the brother and helper of wrong-doing. 3. It was made with reproach and insult. They were encouraging idleness and sedition: "Get ye to your burdens." "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." 4. The rage of the wicked is often the best commendation of God's servants. It is a testimony to their faithfulness.—U.

Ver. 2.—Pharaoh's first response: his answer in word. Moses and Aaron, somehow or other, have found their way into Pharaoh's presence. All things, so far, have happened as God said they would happen. The very brevity and compactness of the record at the end of ch. iv. is an instructive comment on the way in which Moses had mistaken comparative shadows for substantial difficulties. The actual meeting of Moses with Israel is dismissed in a few satisfactory and significant words; as much as to say that enough space had already been occupied in detailing the difficulties started by Moses in his ignorance and alarm. It is when Moses and Pharaoh meet that the tug of war really begins. Moses addresses to Pharaoh the commanded request, and is met, as was to be expected, with a prompt and contemptuous defiance. Observe—

I. PHARAOH, IN HIS REJOINER TO MOSES, PUTS A QUESTION WHICH GOD ALONE CAN PROPERLY ANSWER. "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" *This was evidently in Pharaoh's opinion a question which needed no answer at all.* It had nothing interrogative about it, except the form. Taking the form of a question, it served to express more forcibly Pharaoh's defiant spirit. There was, in his opinion, really no need to consider or confer at all. "Am I not the great Pharaoh, successor to many great Pharaohs before me? Is not my power accepted and undisputed far and wide?" He could not so much as comprehend any danger unless it took the form of physical force; and not only so, but a form plainly visible—near, threatening, overwhelming. If only some great king had been approaching—strong with the strength of a large and victorious army—to demand the liberation of Israel, Pharaoh would not so have spoken. To him the invisible was as the unreal. Pharaoh listens to Moses, and what does he hear?—a claim that seems to dispute his supremacy, from this new deity, whose image he has never seen, whose name mayhap his priests have told him is not that of any deity worshipped in Canaan of which they have ever heard. Certainly it looks a large claim upon the first presentation of it, small as it is in comparison with what is to follow. This, then, is what he hears, and the audacity and presumption of it are not diminished by what he sees. There stand Moses and Aaron, completely devoid in person and surroundings of anything to impress the king with the peril of refusing their request. Surely if the men who say they are sent look so contemptible, the unseen being from whom they say they come may be safely neglected. Such is the reasoning, silently powerful, if not openly expressed, of those who despise and reject the claims of God. Christ is judged of, not as he is in himself, but by the superficial aspect of Christians. Because they are often low in station, or inconsistent in life, or lacking in disposition and ability to make much outward show, the world thinks that there is little or nothing behind them. It is the folly of only too many to take Pharaoh's stand. For the right reception of the things of God we need all possible humility and open-

mindedness; what then is to be done, if upon the very first approach of religion, we pooch-pooch it as mere superstition, folly, and delusion? 2. *This was a question to which Moses could have given a very effective and alarming answer if only he had been allowed opportunity.* Moses, fresh from the revelations and sanctities of Horeb, could have told Pharaoh such a story of the workings of Jehovah as would have been enough, and more than enough, to guide the steps of a right-minded listener. Not only his own personal experience; not only the sight of the burning bush, the rod transformed, the leprous hand, the blood where water ought to be; but also the fulness, the terrible fulness of Jehovah's power in the earlier days of the world, were within his reach to speak about. He could have told Pharaoh very admonitory things concerning Sodom and the Deluge if only he had been willing to listen. We may well believe that the effect of Pharaoh's defiant attitude would be to send Moses away striving to refresh and sustain his mind with the evidences, so available and so abundant, that in spite of this proud king's contempt, Jehovah, in his vast power and resources, was indeed no vain imagination. When the proud and self-sufficient ask this Pharaoh-question, it is for us to make such answer as may be reassuring to ourselves; not to doubt our own eyesight because others are blind, our own hearing because others are deaf.

How few sometimes may know, when thousands err

The truth which we may not be able to make even probable to others, we must strive so to grasp and penetrate, that more and more it may be felt as certain and satisfying to ourselves.

3. *Thus we see how the Lord himself needed to deal with this question.* Knowledge of God is of many kinds, according to the disposition of the person who is to be taught, and according to the use which God purposes to make of him. Pharaoh was evidently not going to be a docile scholar in God's school—one who comes to it willing and eager, thirsting for a refreshing knowledge of the living God. But still he had to be a scholar, willingly or not. He had to learn this much at least, that he was transgressing on the peculiar possessions of God when he sported with Israel in his despotic caprice. It is for no man to say that his present real ignorance gives assurance that he will never come to *some knowledge of God*. It may be as pitifully true of the atheist as it is encouragingly true of the godly, that what he knows not now, he will know hereafter. Now he knows not God, but in due time he will know him; not dubiously, not distantly, but in the most practical and it may be most painful and humiliating manner. Pharaoh says, with a sneer on his face, and derision in his voice, "Who is Jehovah?" That question is duly answered by Jehovah in signs and plagues, and the last answer we hear anything about on earth comes unmistakable and sublime, amid the roll of the Red Sea's returning waters.

II. But Pharaoh not only puts this defiant question; HE UTTERS A MOST DETERMINED RESOLUTION WHICH GOD ALONE CAN ALTER. "Neither will I let Israel go." What then are Israel's chances for the future? There was every certainty that, if left to himself, Pharaoh would go on, tyrannous and oppressive as ever. From a human point of view he had everything to help him in sticking to his resolution. His fears, if he had any—the wealth which he and his people had gained from the incessant toils of Israel—the great dislocations and changes which would have been produced by even a temporary withdrawal of Israel—all these things helped to a firm maintenance of the resolution. It was a resolution which had strong and active support in all the baser feelings of his own breast. It is just in the firmness and haughtiness of such a resolution, revealing as it does the spirit of the man, that we get the reason for such an *accumulation* of calamities as came upon his land. Here is another significant illustration of the manifold power of God, that he could break down so much proud determination. There was no change in Pharaoh's feeling; no conversion to an equitable and compassionate mind; he simply yielded, because he could not help himself, to continuous and increasing pressure, and *God alone was able to exert that pressure*. Pharaoh here is but the visible and unconscious exponent of that dark Power which is behind all evil men and cruel and selfish policies. That Power, holding men in all sorts of bitter disappointments and degrading miseries, virtually says, "I will not let them go." Our confidence ought ever to be, that though we can do nothing to break this bitter bondage, God, who forced the foe of Israel to relax his voracious grasp, will by his own means force freedom for us

from every interference of our spiritual foe. It was Pharaoh's sad prerogative to shut his own heart, to shut it persistently, to shut it for ever, against the authority and benedictions of Jehovah. But no one, though he be as mighty and arrogant as a thousand Pharaohs, can fasten us up from God, if so be we are willing to go to him, from whom alone we can gain a pure and eternal life.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 6-9.—Rulers are not always content simply to refuse inconvenient demands. Sometimes they set to work with much ingenuity and worldly wisdom to prevent their repetition. This is especially the case where they entertain a fear of their petitioners. The Spartans removed Helots, who had earned their freedom, by the Crypteia. The massacre of St. Bartholomew was caused by the Huguenot demand for freedom of worship and the difficulty of repressing it. The Pharaoh now is not content to let things take their course, but devises a plan by which he hopes to crush altogether the aspirations of the Hebrew people, and secure himself against the recurrence of any such appeal as that which had been made to him by Moses and Aaron. The Israelites had recently been employed chiefly in brickmaking. They had had to dig the clay and temper it, to mix it with straw, and mould it into the form of bricks; but the straw had been supplied to them. The king determined that this should be no longer done; the Israelites should find the straw for themselves. It has been estimated that by this change their labour was "more than doubled." (Canon Cook.) It was a not unreasonable expectation that under this system popular meetings would cease (ver. 9); and that Moses and Aaron, not being backed up by the voice of the people, would discontinue their agitation.

Ver. 6.—The same day. Pharaoh lost no time. Having conceived his idea, he issued his order at once—on the very day of the interview with the two leaders. It would be well if the children of light were as "wise" and as energetic on all occasions as the children of darkness. Taskmasters and officers. The word translated "taskmaster" here is not the same as the expression similarly rendered in ch. i. 11; and it is thought not to designate the same class. The *sarey massin* of the former passage are thought to be general superintendents of works, few in number and of high rank, the *nogshim* of the present place to be subordinates, numerous and inferior in position. Both of these classes were probably Egyptians. The "officers" (*shoterim*) were undoubtedly Hebrews. They were especially employed in

keeping the tale of the bricks, and seeing that they reached the proper amount. Literally, the word *shoterim* means "scribes," and is so rendered in most passages.

Ver. 7.—Straw to make brick. Straw was used in Egypt to bind together the clay, or mud, which was, of course, the main material of the bricks. (See Wilkinson, in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. p. 213.) It is usually chopped into small pieces. Let them go and gather straw. This would involve the leaving of the brickfields, and the scattering of the people over the harvest-grounds, where alone they would be able to find straw in any quantity. There are so many harvests in Egypt, that straw would perhaps be obtainable somewhere during the greater part of the year.

Ver. 8.—The tale of the bricks—i.e. the number of the bricks. Exactly as many were to be required of each batch of workmen under the new regulation as previously. The demand was one with which, as the king well knew, it would be impossible to comply. For they be idle. There was so much ground for the charge as this—that hitherto their forced labours had not occupied the whole of their time. They had been able, apparently, to cultivate their own plots of ground (Deut. xi. 10), to raise crops of cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic (Num. xi. 5), to catch fish (*ibid.*), and attend public meetings (Ex. iv. 30, 31). They had, in fact, had time which they could call their own. Now this was to be so no more. The Pharaoh, however, misrepresents and exaggerates, speaking as if their forced labours had been a mere nothing, and mere want of occupation had led them to raise the cry—"Let us go and sacrifice." It would have been far nearer the truth to say, that the severity and continuance of their labours had made the notion of festival time, during which they would cease from their toils, generally popular.

Ver. 9.—Let there more work be laid upon the men. Rather, as in the margin, "Let the work be heavy upon the men." Let the tasks set them be such as to occupy all their time, and not leave them any spare moments in which they may be tempted to listen to mischievous talkers, like Moses and Aaron) who flatter them with vain (literally, *lying*, words. Pharaoh, no doubt, imagined that the hopes raised by the two brothers were vain and illusive. He was utterly blind as to the course which events were about to take

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6—9.—The picture of a tyrant—crafty, energetic, and unspiring. Scripture contains abundant portraiture, not only of good, but also of bad men, the Holy Spirit seeming to be as desirous of arousing our indignation against vice as our sympathy with virtue. Portraits are given us, as more effectual than precepts or general descriptions, appealing as they do to our feelings and imagination rather than to our intellect. The dramatic exhibition of a Pharaoh, an Ahab, a Sennacherib, a Judas Iscariot, is calculated at once to strike the soul and to remain indelibly impressed upon it. Here we have the portrait of a tyrant, characterised especially by three qualities—1. Craft or cleverness; 2. Energy; and 3. Mercilessness. (1.) Pharaoh's craft is shown, first in the skilful way in which he "turns the tables" upon Moses and Aaron, stopping their mouths with the charge that they are "letting the people from their labours," and "endaming the king." (See Ezra iv. 13.) Secondly, it is shown in the rapidity and ingenuity of his thought—"More work must be laid upon the Israelites—let them be given no straw." Thirdly, it is shown further on in his attempts to secure the return of the Israelites by the detention of their children (ch. x. 10) or of their cattle (*ibid.* 24). (2.) Pharaoh's energy appears in the immediate steps that he took to carry his plan out by giving orders for the withholding of the straw without any diminution in the tale of bricks, "the same day" (verse 6). Finally, (3) his mercilessness is seen, first, in his refusing a very moderate request (verses 1, 2); secondly, in his meeting the demand for a relaxation of labour by an addition to it; thirdly and especially, in his making such an addition as was impossible of performance, and involved a continued series of punishments (verses 14—21). Pharaoh did not perhaps know the exact amount of misery which he was inflicting; but he was reckless in respect to it—he did not care what it might cost; the sighs and the groans of a whole nation were as nothing to him; and he adds insult to injury by the reproach (verses 8 and 17)—"Ye are idle, ye are idle."

Ver. 7.—Bricks without straw. The requirement of "bricks without straw" is not always made by a tyrannical king. All employers of labour who expect certain results without allowing sufficient time for them, and then complain that the work is scamped, are guilty of it. So is the father who expects his son to turn out a great scholar, without giving him the necessary books and the necessary instruction to make him one. So is the mistress who scolds her cook for not sending up a first-rate dinner, yet grudges every penny for the kitchen expenses. There are congregations which demand perpetual sermons of a high quality, yet do not either provide their pastors with sufficient money to buy books, or allow them sufficient leisure time for reading them. There are incumbents who act similarly by their curates, mercantile men who, *mutatis mutandis*, act so by their clerks, officials of all kinds who so treat their subordinates. The demand for bricks without straw is, unfortunately, far too common a demand. Let this note be set against it, that it is Pharaonic and tyrannical.

Ver. 9.—Vain words. There can be no doubt that "vain words" are unworthy of attention, deserve contempt, are foolish, unjustifiable. But what are "vain words"? What is the test whereby we are to know whether words are vain or not? Simply, the issue of them. Pharaoh thought that the promises of deliverance wherewith Moses and Aaron had excited the people were "vain words." Sennacherib described similarly the words of trust and confidence in God uttered by Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 20). The Athenians thought the same of St. Paul's words concerning the resurrection (Acts xvii. 32). But we know that, in none of these cases, were the words uttered "vain." The event justified or will justify them. When words then are uttered by any grave authority, especially if they are uttered in the name of God, we should hesitate to call them "vain." We should await the end. Full often, what the scoffer has called "vain words" turn out "words of truth and soberness"—words which tell with terrible force against those who have despised and rejected them—words which to have heard and despised is condemnation in the sight of the Almighty.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4—10.—*Increased cruelty.* View Pharaoh's conduct as illustrative—

I. OF THE VIEW WHICH A WORLDLY MAN TAKES OF RELIGION. "Ye are idle" (ver. 8). This way of putting the matter was partly a pretext—a tyrant's excuse for adding to burdens already sufficiently heavy; but it had so far a ground in Pharaoh's real way of viewing things, that he doubtless regarded the desire to go and sacrifice as an idle, foolish notion, one which would not have come into the people's heads had they been worked hard enough, and which it was his interest to drive out again as soon as possible. Observe in this—1. *A total incapacity to understand the origin of religious aspirations.* Pharaoh had no better account to give of them than that they sprang from idleness. They were the fruit of a roving, unsettled disposition. The cure for them was harder work. This is precisely how the world looks on religion. It is the unpractical dream of people whose working faculties are not in sufficiently vigorous exercise. Of a true thirsting of the soul for God the world has not the slightest comprehension. 2. *A total want of sympathy with these aspirations.* Indulgence in them would be idling—a foolish and profitless waste of time. It is not idling to watch the markets, to speculate on stock, to read novels, to attend the Derby, to run to theatres, to spend evenings in the ball-room, to hunt, fish, shoot, or travel on the Continent, to waste hours in society gossip; but it would be idling to pray, or worship God, or engage in Christian work, or attend to the interests of the soul. To snatch an hour from business to attend a prayer-meeting would be reckoned egregious folly, and as little are the hours at one's disposal when business is over to be spent in such "foolishness." Even the Sabbath, so far as it cannot be utilised for pleasure, is deemed a day "wasted"—a weariness (Amos viii. 6; Mal. ii. 13). 3. *A total disregard of the rights of others in connection with these aspirations.* Thoroughgoing men of the world neither take pains to conceal their own contempt for religion ("vain words," ver. 9), nor trouble themselves with any scruples as to the rights of others. They will, without hesitation, take from the religiously-disposed their opportunities of serving God, if these stand in the way of their own interests. Gladly, had they the power, would they turn the Sabbath into a work-day for the many that it might become (as on the Continent) a play-day for the few. Their own domestics and workpeople are over-driven, and unscrupulously deprived of Sabbath and sanctuary privileges. Where even the plea of humanity is disregarded, the plea of religion is not likely to be allowed much weight.

II. OF THE ALARMS FELT BY A TYRANT AT THE UPRISING OF FREE ASPIRATIONS IN THE SUBJECTS OF HIS TYRANNY. Pharaoh shrewdly foresaw the consequences of a further spread of these new-fangled ideas among the people. The request to go and sacrifice would not be long in being followed by a demand for freedom. Despotism and the spirit of liberty cannot coalesce. The tyrant knows that his power is put in peril the moment people begin to think for themselves—to cherish dreams of freedom—to be moved by religious enthusiasms. His rule can only be maintained at the cost of the extinction in his subjects of the last vestige of mental and spiritual independence. If a spiritual movement like this which sprang up in Israel begins to show itself, it must be stamped out at once, and at whatever cost of suffering and bloodshed. Whatever tends to produce such movements is looked on with hostility. This applies to all kinds of despotisms—civil, ecclesiastical, industrial, social. Hence, under despotic governments, the gagging of the press, suppression of free institutions, restriction of liberty of speech, ostracism of men of public spirit, and opposition to progress and to liberal ideas generally. Hence the antagonism of the Roman Church to learning and science, with the baleful effects which have followed from that antagonism in countries where her influence is supreme (see Laveleye on 'Protestantism and Catholicism in their Bearings upon the Liberty and Prosperity of Nations'; and histories of the Reformation in Spain and Italy). "It has been wittily said, that in Madrid, provided you avoid saying anything concerning government, or religion, or politics, or morals, or statesmen, or bodies of reputation, or the opera, or any other public amusement, or any one who is engaged in any business, you may print what you please, under correction of two or three censors" (M'Crie). Hence the antipathy of the slave-drivers of industry—those who grind the faces of the poor, making their profit out of their

poverty and helplessness—to the diffusion of intelligence among the masses. Hence, in slave-holding countries, the laws against teaching slaves to read, etc. The slaveholder cannot afford to encourage the spread of intelligence, of anything which will enable his slave to realise his manhood. But tyranny of this kind is self-condemned. 1. As *unnatural*. It requires the extinction and suppression of everything noble and good in human nature. It sets itself in opposition to intelligence, freedom, progress, religion, and all holy and spiritual aspirations. 2. As *inhuman*. In consolidating its dominion, it stoops to perpetrate the grossest cruelties. Think of the work of the Inquisition! Think of the blood that has been shed on the shrine of civil liberty! Think of the George Harrises of slavery! "What business had his slave to be marching round the country, inventing machines, and holding up his head among gentlemen? He'd soon put a stop to it. He'd take him back, and put him to hoeing and digging, and see if he'd step about so smart?" ('Uncle Tom's Cabin.') See also, 3. Its *weakness*. Tyranny of this kind cannot endure. Under the influence of ideas from without, a mental and moral awakening is certain to come some day, and the tyrant's power is doomed.

III. OF THE PITILESS CRUELTY OF WHICH MEN GET TO BE CAPABLE IN THE PURSUIT OF INIQUITOUS ENDS: vers. 6—9. Pharaoh was determined to keep the Hebrews in slavery; and so, to suppress this new spirit of discontent which had broken out among them, he must heat their furnace sevenfold, and heap cruelty on cruelty. He may have urged the plea of state necessity, and justified himself by the reflection that less severe measures would not have served his purpose—that he was driven to cruelty by the logic of events. A vain plea in any case, and one which only a heart rendered callous by a long course of inhumanity could have brought itself to entertain. Yet Pharaoh was thus far right, that, once a career of iniquity has been entered upon, events take the matter out of the sinner's hands, and leave him no alternative but either to abandon his evil courses, or be driven on from one cruelty to a worse. And, contemporaneously with the movement of events, there is going on a hardening of the heart, which makes the cruelty possible. It is wonderful what pitiless deeds men get to be capable of, who have others in their power, and who acknowledge no higher law than their own interests. We have only to recall the iniquities of the slave-trade, connived at by many of our most respectable merchants; the inhumanities attendant on the employment of women and young children in mines and factories, as brought to light by Parliamentary Commissions; the former semi-brutal condition of agricultural labourers; the underpaying of needle-women; the horrors of the "sweating system;" the instances of cruelty and rapacity exhibited in the emigration trade, which are described as "among the most atrocious that have ever disgraced human nature" (Chambers's 'Encyc.');

the reckless disregard of the lives of sailors in their being sent to sea in heavily-laden and untrustworthy ships (Plimsoll)—to see how far, even in a civilised country, the thirst of gain will carry men, under circumstances where they can count upon impunity, and evade the censure of public opinion. A Pharaoh could hardly do worse. "Small manufacturers, working with insufficient capital, and in times of depression not having the wherewith to meet their engagements, are often obliged to become dependants on the wholesale houses with which they deal; and are then cruelly taken advantage of. . . . He (the manufacturer) is obliged to work at the wholesaler's terms, and ruin almost certainly follows. . . . As was said to us by one of the larger silkhosiers, who had watched the destruction of many of his smaller brethren—'They may be spared for a while as a cat spares a mouse; but they are sure to be eaten up in the end. . . .' We read that in Hindostan, the ryots, when crops fall short, borrow from the Jews to buy seed, and once in their clutches are doomed. It seems that our commercial world can furnish parallels" (H. Spencer).

Learn: 1. To avoid the *beginning* of a course of injustice. 2. To guard against the hardening of the heart by cruelty. 3. To have an open ear to the cry of the oppressed, and a readiness to support every righteous measure for their protection and relief. 4. See in Pharaoh's tyranny an image of the pitiless tyranny of Satan. He, too, is absolutely merciless in the power he obtains over us. His service is one which grows increasingly more rigorous. I.e., too, would have us make bricks without straw, driving us on by our lusts and passions in pursuit of ends impossible (in his service) of attainment. More acute than Pharaoh, he gets the sinner himself to believe that it is "idle."

to sacrifice to God, and by this means lures him to his service, where he soon binds him in chains more terrible and galling than any which earthly tyrant ever put upon his slaves.—J. O.

Vers. 6—14.—*The increase of trouble for God's people no proof of the failure of his purpose.* 1. THE DEMANDS OF GOD PROVOKE THE WRATH OF THE UNGODLY. The mad persistence of Pharaoh in his injustice is marked—1. In his haste: his commands were issued "the same day." 2. In the severity of the decree: they should find their own straw, and yet deliver the same number of bricks. 3. In his determination to have his commands obeyed. It is not meant to be an idle threat: the overseers are "straitly charged." When God's word is resisted the soul is inflamed to greater evil. The unregenerate spirit is the same everywhere. God's claim has only to be pressed home to be repelled in the same fashion.

II. THE WAY TO DELIVERANCE SOMETIMES LIES THROUGH DEEPER TROUBLE. Israel's case was now harder than it was before (vers. 11—14), and solely because God had arisen to fight for them: but it was the last struggle of a doomed foe. It is thus—1. In the Church's struggle with the world of unbelief: God's message is met with scorn, repression, and opposition of science falsely so called. But these shall vanish away like smoke, and their utterances and deeds will at last be the monuments of their infamy. 2. In the contest with the dominion of sin in the soul. The might of sin is felt most when the Spirit's call is first heard; but God has said, "Let my people go," and the wrath of the enemy will soon be swallowed up in his destruction. 3. In the breaking of the yoke of death. When God's call is heard, "Come up higher," we wrestle in pain and mortal weakness with the dread adversary. He seems to triumph. But the last tie that bound us is broken, and we bid an eternal farewell to the bondage and the grief.—U.

EXPOSITION

Vers. 10—14.—The command of Pharaoh had gone forth—no straw was to be provided for the Israelites, they were themselves to gather straw. The taskmasters could not soften the edict; they could only promulgate it (vers. 10, 11). And the Israelites could only choose between rebelling and endeavouring to obey. To rebel seemed hopeless; Moses and Aaron did not advise rebellion, and so the attempt was made to carry out Pharaoh's behest (ver. 12). But experience proved that obedience to it was impossible. Though the people did their best, and the native officers set over them did their best, and the Egyptian taskmasters hurried them on as much as possible (ver. 13), the result was that the tale of bricks fell short. Then, according to a barbarous practice said to be even now not unknown in Egypt (Kalisch), the native officers who had not delivered in the appointed "tale of bricks" were bastinadoed, suffering agonies for no fault of their own (ver. 16), but because the people had been set an impossible task.

Ver. 10.—The taskmasters . . . went out, *i.e.* quitted the royal palace to which they had been summoned (ver. 6), and proceeded to the places where the people worked. The vicinity of Zoan was probably one great brickfield.

Thus saith Pharaoh. The exact words of Pharaoh (ver. 7) are not repeated, but modified, according to men's ordinary practice in similar cases.

Ver. 11.—Get you straw where ye can find it. Straw was not valued in Egypt. Reaping was effected either by gathering the ears, or by cutting the stalks of the corn at a short distance below the heads; and the straw was then left almost entirely upon the ground. Grass was so plentiful that it was not required for fodder, and there was no employment of it as litter in farmyards. Thus abundance of straw could be gathered in the cornfields after harvest; and as there were many harvests, some sort of straw was probably obtainable in the Delta at almost all seasons of the year. To collect it, however, and chop it small, as required in brickmaking, consumed much time, and left too little for the actual making of the bricks.

Ver. 12.—The people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt. The expression used is hyperbolical, and not to be understood literally. A tolerably wide dispersion over the central and eastern portions of the Delta is probably intended. Stubble instead of straw. Rather, "stubble for the straw." *Teben*, the word translated straw, seems to be properly "chopped straw" (*stramenta minutim concissa*, Cook). The Israelites, who had been accustomed to have this provided for them, gathered now long stalks of stubble

in the fields, which they had subsequently to make into *teben* by chopping it into short bits.

Vers. 13, 14.—The taskmasters hastened them. The Egyptian overseers, armed with rods, went about among the toiling Israelites continually, and “hasted them” by dealing out blows freely on all who made any pause in their work. The unceasing toil lasted from morning to night; yet still the required “tale” could not be produced; and consequently the native officers, whose business it was to pro-

duce the “tale,” were punished by the bastinado at the close of the day not giving in the proper amount. Kalisch observes—“Even now the Arabic fellahs, whose position is very analogous to that of the Israelites described in our text, are treated by the Turks in the same manner. Arabic overseers have to give an account of the labours of their countrymen to the Turkish taskmasters, who often chastise them mercilessly for the real or imputed offences of the Arabic workmen.”

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 10—14.—*A blind obedience to the commands of tyrants not laudable.* The Egyptian taskmasters seem to have carried out their monarch's orders to the full, if not with inward satisfaction, at any rate without visible repugnance. They published abroad the orders given without in any way softening them (vers. 10, 11), harassed the Israelite people all day long by “hasting them” (ver. 13), and bastinadoed the Israelite officers at night (ver. 14). How different their conduct from that of the midwives, when another Pharaoh sought to make them the instruments of his cruelty! Weak women defied the tyrant and disobeyed his commands. Strong sturdy men were content to be his slavish tools and accomplices. But so it is often. “Out of weakness God perfects strength.” He “makes the weak things of the world to confound the strong.” And the consequence is, that the weak, who show themselves strong, obtain his approval and the enduring praise of men, like the midwives; while the strong, who show themselves weak, are condemned by him, and covered with everlasting obloquy, like these taskmasters.

Ver. 14.—*Vicarious suffering.* Vicarious suffering is a blessed thing only when undergone voluntarily. In all other cases it is unjust, oppressive, cruel. At the English court under the early Stuarts there was a boy who had to receive all the punishments deserved by the heir-apparent. This was a piece of detestable tyranny. The execution of children for the offences of their parents, which prevailed under the judges (Josh. vii. 24, 25) and the kings of Israel (2 Kings ix. 26) was still worse; and had not even the show of justice about it, since it was not accepted in lieu of the parents' suffering, but was additional to it. The Oriental system of punishing “head men” for any offence or default of those under their jurisdiction, goes on the idea that they can and ought to prevent such sins of commission or omission. But this idea is not in accord with facts. Frequently they cannot; sometimes they neither can nor ought. In all such cases the punishment inflicted is an injustice; and the system itself must consequently be regarded as no better than an organised and licensed tyranny. Yet large tracts of Asia and Africa groan under it. “How long, O Lord, how long?”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 10—15.—*Bricks without straw.* Tyrants seldom lack subordinates, as cruel as themselves, to execute their hateful mandates. Not only are these subordinates generally ready to curry favour with their lord by executing his orders with punctilious rigour, but, when they get to know that particular persons are in disfavour, they find a positive delight in bullying and insulting the unhappy victims, and in subjecting them to every species of vexatious interference. The callous taskmasters entered heartily into Pharaoh's plans—withheld from the Israelites the straw, while requiring of them the full tale of bricks, and then mercilessly beating the officers for failing to get the people to accomplish the impossible. View in their behaviour—

I. A PICTURE OF THE NOT INFREQUENT TREATMENT OF MAN BY HIS FELLOW-MAN. Society abounds in tyrants, who, like Pharaoh's taskmasters—1. Demand the unreason-

able. 2. Expect the impossible. And the unreasonable in extreme cases is one with the impossible. 3. Are insolent and violent in enforcing their unreasonable demands. The workman, *e.g.*, is scolded because he cannot, in a given time, produce work of given quantity and quality, though production to the extent required is shown to involve a physical impossibility. The public servant is abused because he has not wrought miracles in his particular department, though perhaps he has received neither the material nor the moral support to which he was entitled. The clergyman is blamed for deficiency in pulpit power, while endless calls are made upon him for work of other kinds, which dissipate his energies, and eat into his time for study. The wife is rated by her husband, because comforts and luxuries are not forthcoming, which his wasteful expenditure in other directions prevents her from obtaining. With like unreasonableness, buyers in commercial houses are rated because they cannot buy, and sellers because they cannot sell; and it is broadly hinted to the latter that if means are not discovered for effecting sales, and disposing of perhaps worthless goods, the penalty will be dismissal. And there are worse tyrannies behind. Most iniquitous of all is the system of exacting work from the necessitous, which imposes an unnatural and injurious strain upon their bodily and mental powers, while remunerating it by a pittance barely sufficient to keep soul and body together. The straw of which these bricks are made is the flesh and blood of living human beings—the fibre of despairing hearts. In short, bricks without straw are asked wherever work is required which overtaxes the strength and capability of those from whom it is sought, or where the time, means, or assistance necessary for accomplishing it is denied. To rage, scold, threaten, or punish, because feats which border on the impossible are not accomplished, is simply to play over again the part of Pharaoh's taskmasters.

II. A CONTRAST TO THE TREATMENT WHICH MAN RECEIVES FROM GOD. Unbelief and selfishness, indeed, would fain persuade us of the opposite. Their voice is, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown," etc. (Matt. xxv. 24). And it may be pleaded in support of this that God's demands in respect of obedience go far beyond the sinner's powers. He inherits a depraved nature, yet he is held guilty for its actings, and the demand stands unchanged, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. (Deut. vi. 5). The standard by which he is judged is that of absolute holiness, while yet it is admitted that he is naturally incapable of a single holy thought or resolve. But in this way of putting matters various things are forgotten. 1. The law of duty is a fixed quantity, and even God, by an act of will, cannot remove a sinner from under its obligations. 2. There is an obvious distinction between natural and moral inability. The hardened thief cannot plead his incorrigible thievishness as an excuse for non-fulfilment of the duties of honesty. It is his sin that he is thievish. 3. Depraved beings are condemned for being what they are (evil-disposed, cruel, lustful, selfish, etc.), and for the bad things which they do, not for the good things which they ought to do, but are now incapable of doing. The devil, *e.g.*, is condemned because he is a devil, and acts devilishly; not because it is still expected of him that he will love God with all his heart, etc., and because he fails to do this. But the true answer, as respects God's treatment of mankind, is a very different one. The sinner is not to be allowed to forget that if he has fallen and destroyed himself, God has brought him help. The very God against whom he has sinned desires his recovery, and has provided for it. He has made provision in Christ for the atonement (covering) of his sins. He asks nothing from him of a spiritual nature which his grace is not promised to enable him to accomplish. God presents himself in the Gospel, not as the sinner's exacting taskmaster, but as his friend and Saviour, ready, however multiplied and aggravated his offences—though they be as scarlet and red like crimson—to make them as the snow and wool (Is. i. 18). True, the sinner cannot renew his own heart, but surely he is answerable for the response he makes to the outward word, and to the teachings and drawings of the Spirit, who, given his submission, will willingly renew it for him. True also he cannot, even in the gracious state, render perfect obedience, but over and against this is to be put the truth that perfect obedience is not required of any in order to justification, and that, if only he is faithful, his imperfections will, for Christ's sake, be graciously forgiven him. And the same just and gracious principles rule in God's actings with his servants. Service is

accepted "according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). No making bricks without straw here. The servant with the two talents is held only responsible for the two, not for five (Matt. xxv. 23). Justice, tempered by grace, is the rule for all.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 15—19.—Smarting under the sense of injustice, the Israelite officers "came and cried to Pharaoh" (ver. 15), supposing that he could not have intended such manifest unfairness and cruelty. They were conscious to themselves of having done their utmost, and of having failed simply because the thing required was impossible. Surely the king would understand this, if they pointed it out, and would either allow straw as before, or diminish the number of the bricks. But the king had no desire for justice, and did not even pretend to it. He asked for no particulars, ordered no inquiry into the ground of complaint; but turned upon the complainants with the cuckoo cry—"Idle, idle yourselves—else ye had no time to come here; go, work—go, work." Then the officers felt that they were indeed "in evil case" (ver. 19)—the king was determined not to do justice—no hope remained—they must be beaten again and again, until they died of the punishment (ver. 21).

Ver. 15.—Came and cried. The shrill "cry" of Orientals when making complaint has often been noticed by travellers, and is

probably here alluded to. To Pharaoh. See the "Introductory paragraph" at the beginning of the chapter, where it has been noticed that complainants had free access to the presence of Egyptian kings.

Ver. 16.—They say to us. Or, "they keep saying to us." The participle is used, which implies continuance or repetition. The fault is in thine own people. Literally, "Thine own people is in fault," or "sins."

Ver. 17.—Ye are idle, etc. Compare ver. 8. Pharaoh is evidently pleased with his "happy thought." It seems to him clever, witty, humorous, to tax overworked people with idleness; and equally clever to say to religious people—"Your religion is a mere pretence. You do not want to worship. You want a holiday." We may remark further that idleness and hypocrisy were two sins of the deepest dye, according to Egyptian notions.

Ver. 18.—Go therefore now and work—i.e. "Off with you to the brickfields at once, and get to your own special work of superintendence, which you are neglecting so long as you remain here. It is useless to remain. I reject both of your requests. Straw shall not be given; and the tale of bricks required shall be no less."

Ver. 19.—The officers . . . did see that they were in evil case. See the "Introductory paragraph" to this section, and comp. ver. 21.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15—18.—*A wicked man's persistence in wrong-doing.* Pharaoh when he first gave the order to withhold straw (ver. 7), may not have known the amount of misery he was causing. He may have meant no more than to give the people full occupation, and so prevent such gatherings as that from which Moses and Aaron had come (ch. iv. 29—31), when they appeared before him with their demands. He may not have realised to himself the idea that he was setting his bondsmen an impossible task. But now this fact was brought home to him, and he was asked, as a matter of simple justice, either to let straw be furnished as before, or to allow some diminution in the number of the bricks. It can scarcely be doubted that he knew and felt the demand made to be just. There were the officers before him with the wheels upon their backs. Would they have incurred the severe punishment, could they by any possibility have avoided it? Pharaoh must have known that they would not. But he would not relent. As he had begun, he would continue. He had been more cruel than he meant; but he did not care—it was only Hebrews and bondsmen who had suffered; what mattered their agonies? So he dismisses the complainants with jeers and scoffs: "Ye are idle, ye are hypocrites; go, work." So bad men almost always go on from bad to worse by a "facile descent;" severity deepens into cruelty, unkindness into injustice, religious indifference into impiety. Stop, then, the beginnings of wrong-doing. *Principiis obsta.* Crush the nascent germs of vice in thy heart, O man! Master them, or they will master thee!

Ver. 16.—*Sufferings, even at the hand of lawful authorities, not always deserved.* "Thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people." Punishment often visits the wrong back. Kings commit injuries or follies, and their subjects suffer. Employers are greedy of gain, and their "hands" must work overtime, go without sleep, trench on the Sunday rest. Wholesale tradesmen adulterate goods, and retail traders are blamed and lose custom. Justice itself is often at fault, and punishes the wrong person—sometimes by a mere mistake, as when the wrong man is hanged for a murder; but sometimes also through a defect in the law itself which judges have to administer; as when Christians were delivered to the wild beasts for not sacrificing to the divinity of the emperor, or Protestants were burnt at the stake for denying transubstantiation. It is not to be assumed that the law is always right. The law of any country at any time is only the expression of the will of those who are in authority at the time, and has no more divinity or sacredness about it than they have. Those who transgress the law will, of course, be punished for it; but that fact proves nothing as to their good- or ill-desert. The greatest benefactors of mankind have had to set human law at defiance, and to endure its penalties. Their answer to the authorities who persecute them might constantly be, "Thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 15—20.—*Unheeded expostulation.* Pharaoh's treatment of the officers of the children of Israel, when they appeared before him to expostulate with him on his cruelty, betrays his consciousness of the injustice of his cause.

1. **AN UNJUST CAUSE BETRAYS ITSELF**—1. *By refusal to listen to reason.* The Hebrews had reason on their side, and Pharaoh had not. And because he had not, and knew it, he would not hear them, would not enter into any argument with them. This is the sure mark of a weak cause. People are usually willing enough to defend any of their doings which they think defensible. But when causes are indefensible, and they know this, they do not care to have the light let in upon them. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John iii. 20). 2. *By clutching at flimsy and trumped-up pretexts.* "Ye are idle; ye are idle; therefore ye say," etc. (ver. 17). Pharaoh knew as well as any that they were not idle, but it served his purpose to put forward this pretence. 3. *By falling back in the end on the right of the strong hand* (ver. 16). This is the tyrant's unfailing resort. If he cannot argue, he can compel. If he cannot justify his courses, he can fall back upon his power to enforce submission. His might is his right. Pharaoh had the power, and he meant to use it, so the Israelites might save themselves the trouble of expostulating. This sort of authority, resting on force, without support in righteousness or reason, is necessarily precarious. It can, in the nature of things, only last so long as the power to compel remains with it. No throne is so insecure as that propped up on bayonets.

II. **AN UNJUST CAUSE ADHERED TO AND DEFENDED**—1. *Reacts injuriously upon the moral nature.* The refusal to listen to expostulation was a new stage in Pharaoh's hardening. Besides fortifying his determination to brook no interference in his courses, and strengthening the cruelty of his disposition—anew called into action by the increased oppression of the Hebrews—it necessarily reacted to deprive him of a fresh portion of his moral susceptibility. This is the Nemesis of sin; it leaves the sinner less susceptible with each new appeal that is resisted; it darkens while it indurates; not only strengthens him in evil courses, but increasingly disqualifies him for perceiving the truth and reasonableness of the dissuaves that are addressed to him. Pharaoh's hardening still moves in the region of ordinary morals (see on vers. 1—4). The first step in it was the recoil of his pride and wilfulness against what he knew to be the righteous demand of Moses and Aaron. Another step is the rejection of this righteous appeal. 2. *Exposes the tyrant to the just judgment of God.* The Hebrews were helpless to resist Pharaoh, but there was Another, whose question, "Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?" he would not be able so easily to set aside. God was keeping the account, and for all these things would yet call him to judgment (Eccl. xi. 9; xii. 14); while the king's temporary success in his ways, building him up in a presumptuous self-

confidence, and confirming him in his boast of superiority to Jehovah, was a further step in his hardening—a ripening for destruction. 3. *Is a fresh call for God to interfere on behalf of the oppressed.* This new wrong, instead of leading the Israelites to despair, should only have lent fresh vehemence to their prayers, for it gave them a new plea with which to urge their cause. "For shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry to him day and night, though he bear long with them" (Luke xviii. 7).—J. O.

Vers. 4—18.—*Pharaoh's first response: his answer in deed.* Pharaoh has given a proud verbal refusal to the request of Moses: but he is not contented to stop with words. The first result, discouraging and discrediting of Moses' application, is still further to increase burdens and hardships already scarcely tolerable.

I. CONSIDER HOW THIS ADDITIONAL SEVERITY TO ISRAEL ORIGINATED—that is, how it originated as far as Pharaoh's part in it was concerned. It came through *his utterly mistaken notions as to Moses and Israel.* Pharaoh, as an alert politician, was bound to inquire how it was that Moses had been led to prefer this request; and he came to the conclusion that the people had too much leisure time—did their work far too easily—and thus left an opportunity for the success of any designing demagogue, such as he judged Moses to be. And, indeed, Pharaoh's conjecture showed a very plausible appearance of shrewd insight into human nature. All such readers of this narrative as utterly disbelieve the reality of Divine intervention and supremacy in human affairs, will say that Pharaoh was not far wrong; whereas he was utterly wrong. Moses went into the presence of Pharaoh because the power of God constrained him. He would have gone anywhere to escape the task, if only he could have done it with safety and self-respect. Pharaoh little knew what a profound sense of unworthiness dwelt in the breast of Moses. Other feelings might come and go, mount to flow and sink to ebb; that remained, more penetrating and subduing the more he had to do with God, and the more he had to do with Israel. Pharaoh was also utterly mistaken *as to the people.* The request for liberty had not come from them. They of their own accord and carnal judgment would never have thought of such a request. As soon might the helpless victim of a raging beast of prey turn to it with a real expectation of mercy. The prisoner may devise many plans of escape: but he would reckon it a mere provocation of more painful and stringent captivity, if he addressed to his gaoler a formal request for liberty. Pharaoh then, in his ignorance of God, proved ignorant and mistaken in the whole of his policy. Every view is mistaken, egregiously mistaken, that leaves out the thought of God as a living, intimate, ever-watchful Power.

II. CONSIDER THAT ALL THIS CRUEL TREATMENT DID NOTHING AT ALL FOR PHARAOH. If it had done anything, however little, to delay the final disaster, it would have been something to say: but it did nothing at all. He treated Moses as a mere politician, and Israel as being only in a state of incipient insurrection. If such had been the reality of things, then his policy, however damnable for its cruelty, would have merited at least this admission, that there was a real adaptation of means to ends. But Pharaoh was as yet utterly unconscious of his real enemy. His mind was in a state of darkness, deep as that outward darkness which later overspread his land. All his efforts, summed up and stated in the largest way, simply came to this—that he was making very bitter the temporal life of a fleeting generation. But he himself had not arrested by a single step the advance of a righteous and omnipotent God. Struggling against the visible Moses and the visible Israel, he knew nothing of how to resist the invisible God. A man may rage about, putting out all candles and lamps, leaving us for awhile in darkness, but he has not retarded the sunrise by even the minutest fragment of time. This is our glory and our comfort, if we have the spirit of Christ dwelling in us, that we are contending against one who has only carnal weapons. We are not allowed to take carnal weapons; they are of no use to us; and never should we forget that they are of no use to those who are against us. Pharaoh did not delay God's liberating work; that work went on in all the majestic ease of its divinity, amid the smittings of the oppressor and the wallings of the oppressed. Making bricks without straw was mere child's-play compared with the enterprise on which Pharaoh was now embarked. He might as well have gone out with the sword and spear against the pestilence and the famine, as against Israel with a mere increase of oppression and cruelty.

III. THIS ADDITIONAL CRUELTY SHOWED THE IMPERATIVE NEED OF DIVINE INTERVENTION. If Pharaoh was powerless to delay the advance of God he was very powerful

to shut out interference from any other quarter. Help in God, sure and sufficient help, but help only in God, was one of the great lessons which all these painful years were meant to teach Israel. Pharaoh had unmistakable power of the human, despotic, might-makes-right sort over Israel. As the inquisitor by an easy nod signifies to give the thumb-screw another turn, so Pharaoh had only to send out his royal wish, and all the taskmasters had Israel at once in fresh agony. And just so we have to be taught by a bitter experience that as Christ is a Saviour from sin, with all its fatal fruits, so he is the only Saviour. The first attempt at a real protest and resistance against sin brings out all its power. Though the sinner's miseries do not begin when Christ the accredited deliverer makes his first approach to deliver, there is nevertheless a distinct accession to them. Christ cannot challenge the power of sin in any of us without rousing up into intense activity the evil already working in our breasts. Pharaoh was not really a more powerful ruler after the visit of Moses than he was before; but the disposition and power then became manifest. The hearts of the generation in the midst of which Christ lived and died were not of exceptional malignity or obduracy. The generation immediately before and the generation immediately after, would have treated him in exactly the same way. But it was necessary for him to draw out sin into a full revelation of its hideous potency, in order that it might be made perfectly clear that none but himself could deal with it. True, Pharaoh was glorying in what was only a fabric of delusions and a refuge of lies; but, frail though it was, no breath of man had strength enough to blow it down. None but God could make the effectual and dissipating storm to descend upon it.—Y.

Vers. 15—chap. vi. ver. 1.—*The troubled find consolation in God only. The three cries.* 1. ISRAEL'S EXPOSTULATION WITH PHARAOH (15—19). They complain to him of the wrongs they suffer; but he who does not hear God will not listen to man. 1. It was reasonable to expect that their remonstrance might lead to redress. Pharaoh's decree might have been issued under momentary irritation. 2. They came with humility and modesty. They brought no railing accusation. They used no threats. They did not even make a silent show of their strength. And yet the only outcome of their appeal is deeper grief, more utter hopelessness (19). They who have no hope but in man will find little to sustain them.

II. THEIR UPBRAIDING OF MOSES AND AARON (20, 21). 1. They spoke truth. The demand for liberty of worship had been seized by Pharaoh as a pretext for more oppressive measures. 2. They did not speak the whole truth. God and his purpose were kept out of sight. They were counted as nothing. How often is this done in our despondency and murmuring! 3. Their reproaches, though met by silence and grief equal to their own, brought no help to them. There is as little help in upbraiding friends for failure as in spreading their injustice before foes.

III. MOSES' CRY TO GOD. 1. He "returned to the Lord." He did not seek to unburden his soul even to Aaron. The first step to help is to seek God's presence. 2. The holy boldness of his prayer. The grieved spirit is poured out. There is nothing kept back. God does not complain of our boldness, but of our restraining prayer before him. 3. God's answer (vi. 1). (1) This very failure shows God's truth (iv. 21). (2) God shall fight for them: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh." (3) Pharaoh's wrath and power will serve only to make their deliverance perfect. He will "drive them out of his land." Israel found no consolation; Moses does.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 20, 21.—On quitting the presence of Pharaoh, the officers of the Israelites, burning with the sense of the injustice done them, and deeply apprehensive with respect to their own future, found Moses and Aaron waiting in the precincts of the court to know the result of their application. It need cause no surprise that they poured out their pent-up indignation

upon them. Were not Moses and Aaron the sole cause of the existing state of things? Did not the extreme affliction of the people, did not their own sufferings in the past, did not their apprehended sufferings in the future, originate wholly in the seductive words which the two brothers had addressed to them at the assembly of the people? (ch. iv. 29—31).

Accordingly, they denounced, almost cursed their officious would-be deliverers (ch. v. 21). "The Lord look upon you, and judge" between you and us, whether the blame of this whole matter does not lie upon you, its initiators—you have made us to be abhorred in the sight of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptians generally—you have brought us into danger of our lives—the Lord judge you!"

Ver. 20.—Who stood in the way. Rather, "who waited to meet them." It was not accident, but design, that had brought the two brothers to the spot. They were as anxious as the officers to know what course Pharaoh would take—whether he would relax the burthens of the people or no—whether he would have compassion or the contrary.

Ver. 21.—They said unto them. The officers were too full of their wrongs to wait until questioned. They took the word, and, without relating the result of their interview, implied it. The Lord look upon you, and judge, they said, meaning "the Lord (Jehovah)

consider your conduct, and judge it"—not exactly, "condemn it and punish it" (Keil and Delitzsch)—but "pass sentence on it." "judge whether it has been right or not." We make this appeal because ye have at any rate done us a great injury—ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh. (Note the mixed metaphor, which shows perhaps rather that "in the eyes" had lost its original meaning, and come to signify no more than "with" or "in respect of," than that the literal meaning of "making a person's savour to stink" did not occur to the writer.) Nay, ye have done more—ye have put a sword in the hand of his servants to slay us. That is to say, "ye have armed them with a weapon wherewith we expect that they will take our lives." Either they will beat us to death—and death is a not infrequent result of a repeated employment of the bastinado—or when they find that punishment unavailing they will execute us as traitors. On the use of the bastinado as a punishment in Egypt, see Chabas, 'Mélanges Egyptologiques,' 3^{me} série, vol. I. pp. 100—6.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 21.—*The servants of God liable to reproach from friends no less than enemies.* Moses and Aaron had borne the reproaches and scoffs of Pharaoh (vers. 4—8) without flinching. It was natural that an enemy should revile them. Pharaoh might tax them with idleness and insincerity in religion, if he pleased. The stab did not penetrate very deep, nor cause a very grievous smart. But when their brethren turned upon them and uttered reproaches, it was different. Then the wound went to the heart; the pain was bitter, scarce endurable. It made them misdoubt themselves. Had they really not acted for the best? Had they been self-seeking, or vainglorious, or reckless, or even injudicious? Such thoughts will always occur even to the best men, if on their plans seeming to have miscarried their friends reproach them. The best men best know their own frailty, and how easy it is for man to mar God's work by his own imperfections. It requires a very brave soul to bear up against the reproaches of friends, especially when there seems to be a ground for them. The more careful therefore should friends be not to reproach God's servants causelessly, or unless they can point out where they have been wrong. Actions are not to be always judged by their results, or, at any rate, not by their immediate results. Moses and Aaron had done quite right; they had obeyed God; they were bound to act as they had acted. It had not pleased God to give success to their efforts as yet. The officers should have had patience, should have prayed to God for relief, but should have forbore from reproaching the innocent.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 20—23.—*Murmuring and faith.* The Israelites were naturally sorely disappointed at the issue of the interview with Pharaoh; and with the unreasonableness so often seen in those whose expectations have received a check, they turned on Moses and Aaron, and accused these innocent men of being the authors of their misfortune. Moses and Aaron themselves were almost as dumbfounded as their accusers at the turn events had taken; but one of them, at least, behaved with wisdom. The Israelites accused men: Moses took his complaint to God, and opened up to him all the soreness of his heart. This portion of the narrative suggests the following reflections:—

1. GOD'S PROVIDENCE OFTEN ASSUMES AN ASPECT OF GREAT MYSTERY TO US. It did so to Moses and the Israelites (vers. 22, 23). They had concluded that now that

God had taken up their cause, their trials and sorrows were at an end; but in entertaining so comfortable a hope, they found they were deceived. The first step on the road to the promised deliverance had plunged them into a worse plight than ever. They had almost felt the breath of liberty on their cheeks, when suddenly their hopes are dashed from them, and the situation darkens till in its pitiless rigour it becomes well-nigh unendurable. So God's providence is often to the godliest a sore and perplexing mystery. It is not merely that things are not going as we wish, or as fast as we expect—this need not surprise us, though oftentimes it does—but that Jehovah seems acting contrary to his own perfections, to his character, to his revealed purpose, to the promise on which he has encouraged us to trust. The wicked prosper; the righteous are afflicted (Ps. xxxvii.; lxxiii.). Prayers seem unanswered, and the hopes we had begun to cherish, the expectations we had built upon his Word, are bitterly disappointed. The race seems to the swift, and the battle to the strong of this world, while “waters of a full cup are wrung out” to the saints whom God has pledged himself to bless and to protect. This is what distresses us, and the distress is not surprising.

II. THE MYSTERY WHICH MEETS US IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE ACTS AS A TEST OF CHARACTER. It drove Moses to prayer, but the multitude to murmurings and reproaches. As this storm burst over Israel, the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed (Luke ii. 35). Doubters would curse themselves for trusting to one whom, they would declare, they had always suspected of deceiving them; the timid would be heard reiterating, “We told you it would come to this; we saw it from the first!” while the profane would break out into open blasphemies, and the superficial crowd—those who had been most carried away by the enthusiasm—would groan and weep in utter disconsolateness, and pour out rash accusations against Heaven and against Moses and Aaron, who had brought them into all this trouble. Yet with foolish inconsistency they would call on the God they were mistrusting to judge between them and the men who had brought to them his message (ver. 21). Comp. Christian and Pliable at the Slough of Despond in ‘Pilgrim's Progress.’ Mystery in God's providence, in itself a moral necessity and inevitable, is thus used by him for important ends in the testing and disciplining of character. It brings to light our weaknesses; sifts the chaff from the wheat; educates us to trust; convinces us of ignorance; disenchant us of illusive hopes; leads us to prayer and wrestling with God. Thus it prepares us for further discoveries of the Divine wisdom when the time comes for the veil being removed, and educates us for higher service.

III. THE MYSTERY WHICH ENSHROUDS GOD'S PROVIDENCE ARISES FROM OUR PARTIAL AND IMPERFECT COMPREHENSION OF HIS PLAN. Had God's purpose been simply to get Israel out of Egypt in the easiest way possible, and with least cost of suffering to the people, the permission of this new cruelty would indeed have been inexplicable. But it is not in this way, or for such ends, or on these terms, that God conducts the government of his world. The error of Israel lay in looking on this one little bit of an unfinished work, and in judging of it without reference to the whole design of which it was a part. For God's purpose was not merely that the people should be delivered, but that they should be delivered in such a way, and with such accompaniments of power and judgment, as should illustriously glorify his own perfections, and print the memory of his goodness on their hearts for ever; while, as regards Pharaoh, his design was to glorify his power upon him (ch. ix. 16), and make him an example to all after ages of the folly of resisting the Almighty. This being the end, it was obviously indispensable that events should not be unduly hastened, but allowed, as far as possible, to take a natural course. Time and scope must be given to Pharaoh to develop his real disposition, and the development must not be prematurely interfered with. The people must be led by a way they knew not, and in paths they had not known; the way chosen could not be the absolutely shortest, but must include many turnings and windings, and even seem at times to be bending backwards; but the end would be “to make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight” (Is. xlii. 16). And this is truly the explanation of all our difficulties with regard to Divine providence. It is not God who is at fault, but our own haste and shortsightedness, that perceive not all the ends he has in view, nor how wonderfully he is working towards those ends by the very circumstances which perplex and baffle us. We know but “in part” (1 Cor. xiii. 12). The thoughts of Infinite Wisdom cannot all be made plain to us. The little that is before us we see,

but how much lies beyond which is involved in the hiding of his power! (*Hab. iii. 4.*) Our walking must be "by faith," not "by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7).—J. O.

Vers. 19—21.—*Thoughtless smiters of a brother in adversity.* This whole chapter particularly abounds in illustrations of human ignorance and error. We have seen in what dense darkness was the mind of Pharaoh; and under what utter misapprehensions he multiplied the sorrows of Israel. Now we are introduced to the leaders of Israel, treating Moses with equal injustice, because they are not able to see the difference between the human instrument and the Divine hand that holds it. No more than Pharaoh can they pierce through Moses to the mighty God behind him. It says in ch. iv. 31, that when the people saw the signs they believed; here is conduct which shows for how little their faith counted. As soon as they were set to make bricks without straw, their faith utterly vanished. Yet surely the truth of God remained. Present *human cruelty*, let it press ever so hard, cannot alter past manifestations of *Divine power*. The God who gave his Son the parable of the Sower was prepared for such a lapse into unbelief on the part of his people. His signs were like the seeds which found no depth of earth; when persecution arose because of the message of Moses, the people were straightway offended. Consider—

I. IN WHAT A STATE OF MIND MOSES WOULD BE WHEN THESE OFFICERS ATTACKED HIM. We know from his own language (vers. 22, 23) what his state of mind was *after the attack*; but even before it he must have been a prey to deep grief and gloomy apprehensions. We may be sure that when these officers came upon him, they did not find proofs of indifference and carelessness in his face. He must have been very popular just after he had wrought the signs; as popular as Jesus was after he had fed the five thousand. Aaron, doubtless, had been instructed by him to enlarge on the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and bring out into the boldest relief the terms of the Divine promises. Thus the confidence and expectation of the people—a reception altogether beyond his hopes—would lift him also into a confidence and expectation all the more precious because of his previous despondency. And now, as he sees the condition of his brethren, that despondency is more painful than ever. No imagination of ours can exaggerate the perplexity and sadness into which Moses would be thrown.

II. THUS WE ARE CALLED TO NOTICE THE INDIFFERENCE OF MOSES' BRETHREN TO HIS PAINFUL POSITION. He thought a great deal more upon their sorrows than they did upon his. The grief of selfish people, in the reckless abandonment with which it speaks and acts, furnishes as painful evidence as we can find of the extent to which human nature has fallen from its first estate. It is a greedy, insatiable feeling. It is an awful thing to consider that the very concentration of our thoughts on our own sufferings makes us to increase the sufferings of others. Why, even when others are to blame, we might safely leave them to the observant, unforgetting God, to their own consciences, and to the ultimate harvest which every doer of wrong must reap; and very often they are not to blame at all. If only these smarting Israelites had been able in a right spirit, to look at the heart of Moses, they would have seen occasion for supporting him with the greatest tenderness, gratitude, and patient endurance. What right had they to complain of Moses? He had told them a coherent, straightforward story, given them the signs; and they, in return, had believed him for the very works' sake. If there is any time when we should be *slow to speak*, it is in our sorrow. We do well then to be silent, until such times as God has purged out of our minds all selfish desires and groundless expectations. When all these are gone, and the truth which he alone can plant is also ripened, then we shall be able to say, "It was *good* for us to be afflicted;" at present Israel said that it was *bad*—as bad as bad could be—and Moses was the convenient person on whom they could lay the blame.

III. THESE OFFICERS HAD NOT INSIGHT ENOUGH TO LOOK BEYOND FIRST CONSEQUENCES. They could not look through the pain of the present to a future which was only attainable through that present. Thus the disciples spoke in deep perplexity and disappointment concerning their missing Master as if he had vanished like a dream of the night. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." So they spoke, not having appreciated his recent word, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." We shall do well to consider in every enterprise, that *first consequences are very deceptive*. When they bring hardship we must not, therefore, turn back; when they bring pleasure, we must not therefore conclude

that still greater pleasures lie beyond. Israel had no right to make any assumptions whatever as to the first consequences of Moses' visit to Pharaoh. The true and only safe position for Israel to take up was this: "Here are these signs; they are signs that Jehovah has sent Moses, and is with him; let us accept them in full and patient reliance." A man does not dispute the truth of the finger-post which points him into the right road, because soon after he has passed it he comes to a worse bit of travelling than any he has had before. There is a profound and admonitory generalisation in that way of indicating Christian experience which puts the Slough of Despond so early in the pilgrim's journey: and if first consequences that bring hardship are to be mistrusted, surely we must be even more cautious when the first consequences are full of pleasure. Though we be told to remember *our Creator* in the days of our youth—his claims, his expectations, and his judgment-day—the danger is that we shall only too easily forget all this, and remember only that we are strong, ambitious, able to enjoy, and with abundant opportunities for enjoyment. We must always mistrust the mere pleasure of our senses; the pleasure of tastes and likings. Liking a thing is never a sufficient reason for doing it; disliking never a sufficient reason for refusing to do it. God appeals to our prudence, to our conscience, to our pity, to our fears, but never to our tastes. And be it ever remembered that there is one first consequence which never deceives nor disappoints those who put themselves in the way of it. Do that which is right in the sight of God, and there is an immediate and pure pleasure at the heart, which all the waves and billows of adversity cannot wash away. For instance, we cannot believe for a moment that Moses regretted his compliance with the commands of Jehovah. They had been clear and imperative, steady and unrelaxing in their pressure on his conscience. The pain from the reproaches of Israel was bad enough; but it would have been a far worse pain, if he had sought to flee from the test of the burning bush, and, Jonah-like, bury himself with his sheep in the very depths of the wilderness.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 22, 23.—The two brothers made no reply to the words of the officers. Perhaps their hearts were too full for speech; perhaps they knew not what to say. Whatever faith they had, it did no doubt seem a hard thing that their interference, Divinely ordered as it was, should have produced as yet nothing but an aggravation of their misery to the Israelite people. They could not understand the course of the Divine action. God had warned them not to expect success at once (ch. iii. 19; iv. 21); but he had said nothing of evil consequences following upon their first efforts. Thus we can well understand that the two brothers (and especially Moses, the more impetuous of them) were bitterly grieved and disappointed. They felt their cup of sorrow to be full—the reproaches of the officers made it overflow. Hence the bitterness of the complaint with which this chapter terminates, and which introduces the long series of precious promise, contained in the opening section of ch. vi.

Ver. 22.—Moses returned unto the Lord. We are not to understand that Moses had forsaken God and now "returned" to him but simply that in his trouble he had recourse

to God, took his sorrow to the **Throne of Grace**, and poured it out before the Almighty. A good example truly, and one which Christians in all their trials would do well to follow. **Lord, wherefore, etc.** The words, no doubt, are bold. They have been said to "approach to irreverence." But there are parallels to them, which have never been regarded as irreverent, in the Psalms: e.g. "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? Why does thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?" (Ps. lxxiv. 1.) "How long wilt thou hide thyself? Where are thy former lovingkindnesses? Wherefore hast thou made all men for nought?" (Ps. lxxxix. 46-9), and the like. Kalisch seems right in saying that "the desponding complaint of Moses was not the result of disbelief or doubt, but the effort of a pious soul struggling after a deeper penetration into the mysteries of the Almighty."

Ver. 23.—He hath done evil to this people. See above, vers. 7-9, and ver. 14. Pharaoh had increased the burdens of the whole nation, and in this way "done evil" to them. He had also brought the punishment of scourging on a number of the chiefs. Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. The promised deliverance (ch. iii. 8, 20) had not come—there was no sign of it—the people was suffering under a more cruel bondage than ever.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The religious soul takes its griefs straight to God.* When our hopes are disappointed, when matters fall out otherwise than as we wish, when our enemies resist us, and our friends load us with reproach, how sweet to have a safe refuge whither we may betake ourselves, even the bosom of our most loving God! "Truly God is loving unto Israel." His hand may be slack, "as men count slackness;" but it is not crippled or paralysed—it is always "mighty to save." Worldlings take their difficulties and their troubles to counsellors whom they deem wise, or to friends whom they regard as powerful, or to subordinates whom they think to be crafty, but never to God. The religious soul's first instinct in deep trouble is to seek solitude, to fly from man, and to pour out all its grief before the Lord. It will even venture, like Moses, to expostulate—to ask to be shown the reason why God has disappointed it and troubled it—to demand "Why is thy wrath so hot?" and "When wilt thou comfort me?" It does not doubt but that in the end all will be right, that God will do as he has promised; but it wants to be sustained, upheld, comforted as to the intermediate time—to be assured that God "has not forgotten to be gracious," that he is still nigh at hand, that he "will not leave it nor forsake it."

SECTION IV.—CHAPTER VI. 1—27.

DEPRESSION OF MOSES, AND CONFIRMATION OF HIS MISSION.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI

Vers. 1—8.—The expostulation of Moses did not offend God. God gave him, in reply to it, a most gracious series of promises and assurances, well calculated to calm his fears, assuage his griefs, and comfort his heart; and he confirmed the whole to him by his name JEHOVAH, "the Only Existent," and therefore "the Eternal and Immutable." This name he had previously revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai, as his peculiar name, and the one by which he would choose to be called (ch. iii. 13—15). He had also told him to proclaim this name to the people. This command is now repeated (ver. 6) very solemnly; and with it are coupled the promises above alluded to. 1. That God would certainly bring the Israelites out of Egypt, despite the unwillingness of Pharaoh (vers. 1 and 6), 2. That he would do this "with a stretched-out arm," and by means of "great judgments" (ver. 6); 3. That he would keep the covenant which he had made with the patriarchs to give their descendants the land of Canaan (ver. 4) and would assuredly "bring in" the Israelites to that land, and "give it them for an heritage" (ver. 8).

Ver. 1.—Now shalt thou see. There was encouragement in the very word "Now." Moses' complaint was, that God delayed his coming, would not show himself, was "slack concerning his promise." In reply he is told that there is to be no longer any delay—the work is just about to commence. "Now shalt thou see." With a strong hand shall he let them go. The "strong hand" is not Pharaoh's, but God's. "By means of my strong hand" (or "overpowering might") "laid upon him shall he be induced to let them go," and similarly with the other clause. Drive them out. This phrase well expresses the final anxiety of Pharaoh to be rid of the Israelites. (See ch. xii. 31, 22.)

Ver. 2.—And God spake. The promise of the first verse was, apparently, given first, and was quite distinct from all the others—perhaps separated from them by an interval of hours, or days. It was especially addressed to Moses. The rest was in the main (ver. 6—8) a message to the people. I am the Lord. Or, "I am JEHOVAH." Compare iii. 15, and note *ad loc.*

Ver. 3.—I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty. See Gen. xvii. 1 for the revelation of this name to Abraham, and Gen. xxxv. 11 for its repetition to Jacob. We do not find the full name used by God in any appearance to Isaac; but Isaac himself uses it in Gen. xxviii. 3. By my name Jehovah was

I not known unto them. The explanation of this passage is by no means easy. God himself, according to Gen. xv. 7, revealed himself to Abraham as Jehovah before declaring his name to be El-Shaddai (God Almighty); and again revealed himself to Jacob as Jehovah-Elohim (*ib.* xxxviii. 13). Abraham named the place where he had been about to sacrifice Isaac, "Jehovah-jireh" (*ib.* xxi. 14). That Moses regarded the name as known even earlier, appears from Gen. iv. 1. It was probably as old as language. The apparent meaning of the present passage cannot therefore be its true meaning. No writer would so contradict himself. Perhaps the true sense is, "I was known to them as a Being of might and power, not as mere absolute (and so eternal and immutable) existence." This meaning of the word, though its etymological and original meaning, may have been unknown to the patriarchs, who were not etymologists. It was first distinctly declared to Moses at Sinai (*ch.* iii. 14, 15).

Ver. 4.—I have established my covenant with them. Compare Gen. xv. 18—21: xviii. 7, 8; xxvi. 3; xxviii. 13. The land of Canaan, in a narrow acceptance, reached "from Sidon unto Gaza" (Gen. x. 19); in a wider sense it included the whole tract between "the river of Egypt (*Wady-el-Arish*) and the great river, the river Euphrates" (*ib.* xv. 18). It was this larger tract which was promised by God to Abraham. The land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. Literally, "the land of their sojourns wherein they sojourned." (So Kalisch.) It was by permission of the lords of the soil—the Canaanites, Perizzites, Hittites, and others, that Abraham and his descendants dwelt in Canaan to the time of Jacob's descent into Egypt. (See Gen. xii. 6; xiii. 7; xxiii. 7; xxvii. 46, etc.)

Ver. 5.—I have also heard the groaning. Compare *ch.* ii. 24 and iii. 9. The repetition is in consequence of Moses' expostulation (*ch.* v. 22, 23), and is to assure the Israelites that God has not forgotten them, but will sustain them under their afflictions, and will shortly deliver them.

Ver. 6.—Say unto the children of Israel. God felt for the disappointment which the people had suffered in finding no alleviation of their toils, but the reverse, after their hopes had been raised high by the words of Moses (*ch.* iv. 31). He therefore sent them an inspiring and gracious message. "They should be rid

of their bondage; they *should* be brought out; they *should* be redeemed and delivered by his mighty arm and miraculous intervention. He, Jehovah, had said it." Faith would lay hold on this assurance and cling to it, even though God still delayed his coming, and did not precipitate matters. A stretched-out arm. Arms are stretched out by men to help and save. An outstretched arm in the Egyptian writing meant "action." The phrase, elsewhere so common, is here used for the first time. (Compare, however, *ch.* iii. 20.) It was significant of active, energetic help. Great judgments. These had been previously hinted at (*ch.* iii. 20 and *ch.* iv. 22) but had not been previously called "judgments." Compare Gen. xv. 14: "Also that nation whom they serve will I judge." The plagues of Egypt were not merely "wonders," but punishments inflicted on a proud and cruel nation by a Judge.

Vers. 7, 8.—The promises are continued, heaped one upon another. 1. God will take them for his own people. 2. He will be, in a special sense, their God. 3. They shall clearly know that it is he who brings them forth out of Egypt. 4. They shall be brought into the promised land. 5. The land shall be made over to them, and become their own inheritance. The Israelites were formally taken to be God's people at Sinai (*ch.* xix. 5, 6); where, at the same time, he became (specially but not exclusively) their God (*ch.* xx. 1; xxix. 45, 46). They had evidence that it was he who brought them forth in the pillar of fire and of a cloud (*ch.* xiii. 21; xiv. 19, 20, etc.). They were brought into the promised land by Joshua (*Josh.* iv. 1), and given the full possession of it by him and his successors—the various judges and kings, until at last, under David and Solomon, they held the entire tract that had been promised to Abraham (see 1 Kings iv. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 26).

Ver. 8.—The land which I did swear to give it to Abraham, etc. See Gen. xxii. 16—18; xxvi. 3, etc. The only formal oath is recorded in Gen. xxii. 16; but an oath is perhaps implied in every covenant between God and man. God's faithfulness is pledged to the performance of the terms of the covenant on his part. I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord. Rather, "I will give it you for an heritage, I the Lord" (or "I Jehovah," or "I the Eternal One"). "You have the pledge of my Eternity and Immutability that it shall be yours."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*God's condescension to a weak faith.* As the Lord Jesus condescended to Thomas, and bade him "reach hither his finger and behold his hands, and reach hither his hand and thrust it into his side," so that he might be no longer "faithless, but believing" (*John* xx. 27), so Jehovah now declared to Moses that, if he could not walk

by faith, sight should be vouchsafed to him. "Now shalt thou see," etc. Human infirmity is so great, man's faith is so weak, the best are so liable to accesses of distrust and despondency, that, if God were extreme to mark what is in this way done amiss, few indeed would be those who could "abide it." Therefore, in his mercy, he condescends. Well for man could he breathe continually the higher, rarer, atmosphere of faith. But, if he cannot, yet has Godward aspirations, so that he takes his distrust and his despondency to God, as Moses did, God will in no wise cast him out. He will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He will accept the imperfect service that is still service, and allow his servant to work in a lower sphere. Henceforth the faith of Moses was not much tried—he had soon sight to walk by. When once the series of plagues began, he could no longer ask, "Why is it that thou hast sent me?" He could see that the end was being advanced—the deliverance being extorted from the king—and that the day of final triumph was fast coming.

Vers. 2, 3.—God's names and their importance. With men a name is simply a "mark of difference"—a mode of distinguishing one individual from another; and the particular name that a man bears is, generally speaking, a matter of the very slightest importance. But with God the case is otherwise. The names of God have always been among all men significant names. If their signification is clear, or generally known, then men's views of the Supreme Being are vitally affected by the names under which they know him. Persons whose only name for God is *Dyaus* or *Tien*—"the heaven"—are not likely to be strongly apprehensive of the personality and spirituality of the Creator. If God is known as Ammon, the main idea of him will be, that he is a riddle and a mystery; if as Shaddai, that he is powerful; if as Mazda, that he is wise or bounteous. When monotheism is firmly established, it is well that God should be known by many names, as El, Elohim, Adonai, Eliun, Shaddai, Jehovah, because then his many and various attributes are better apprehended. If, however, God is to be known by one name only, or by one special name, while there is none more pure or lofty than Jehovah—"the Self-Existent"—there is none more tender and loving than our own English name, God—i.e. "the Good."

Vers. 4—8.—God a keeper of covenants. God is declared in Scripture to be one who "keepeth covenant and mercy, yea, to a thousand generations" (Deut. vii. 9). He is ever faithful. He cannot lie. He is not a man that he should repent. The bow which he set in the cloud, when he covenanted with Noah that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh, is still there, and the promise of which it was the sign has been kept—there has come no repetition of the Flood, no second destruction of mankind by water. God has kept the covenant which he made with Israel at Sinai—first, on the side of promise, in giving them all the good things which he said he would give them; and then, on the side of threatening, in bringing upon them all the calamities which he said he would bring. With Christians, too, God enters into covenant at their baptism, promising them protection, spiritual aid, and eternal life in heaven, on their maintaining faith and repentance. This covenant, like his others, he will assuredly keep. Let them be but true to him, and they need have no fear but that he will be true to them. The Promised Land will be theirs—he will give it to them for an heritage—he, Jehovah!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—A Divine commentary on a Divine name. The antiquity of the name Jehovah, setting aside direct testimonies to its occurrence in earlier scriptures, is sufficiently proved by its etymology (from *havah*, an old—and, in the days of Moses, obsolete—form of the verb "to be"), and from its presence (in composition) in pre-Mosaic proper names (e.g. ver. 20). It is absurd to press this passage in proof of the ignorance of the patriarchs of this name of God, when one observes—1. That the context plainly relates to a commentary which God was about to give on this name in deeds. 2. That the name is not here announced, but is presupposed as known—"My name Jehovah." 3. That in ch. iii. 14—16, where it is announced, it is expressly referred to as a name of older date—God styling himself repeatedly, "Jehovah God of

your fathers." The knowledge of God by this name in the present passage has obvious reference to a knowledge derived from manifestation of the attributes implied in the meaning of the name.

1. "JEHOVAH" IN CONTRAST WITH "EL-SHADDAI" (ver. 3). 1. El-Shaddai means, as translated, "God Almighty." It denotes in God the simple attribute of power—All-Mightiness—power exerted chiefly in the region of the natural life. 2. Jehovah, on the other hand, has a deeper and wider, an infinitely fuller and richer meaning. It denotes God as possessed of the perfections of the Absolute—self-identical and changeless because self-existent and eternal. God is eternally what he is (ch. iii. 14)—the Being who is and remains *one* with himself in all he thinks, purposes, and does. This implies, together with immutability, the attribute of self-determining freedom, and that unlimited rule (dominion, sovereignty) in the worlds of matter and mind, which is of the essence of the conception of the Absolute. Hence such passages as these:—"I am Jehovah, I change not" (Mal. iii. 6); "Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places" (Ps. cxxx. 6); "Jehovah, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else" (Deut. iv. 39). Jehovah is, moreover, the God of *gracious* purpose. It is this which gave the name its depth of interest to the Hebrew bondsmen, who were not likely to be greatly influenced by purely ontological conceptions. *The chosen sphere for the manifestation of the attributes denoted by these names of God was that marked out by the promises of the Covenant.* El-Shaddai, e.g., while declaring the possession by God of the attribute of power in general, had immediate reference to the manifestations of power which God would give in the birth of Isaac, and in the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham of a numerous posterity (Gen. xvi. 1—7). It was power working in the interests of grace, in subservency to love. The same is true of the name Jehovah. A view of God in his bare absoluteness would awaken only a speculative interest; but it is different when this self-existent, eternal Being is seen entering into history, and revealing himself as the God of compassionating love. Grace and mercy are felt to be no longer foreign to the meaning of the name, but to be as much a part of it as changelessness and freedom. This, accordingly, was what the name told to Israel; not simply that there was an Absolute, or even that he who had entered into covenant with the Fathers, and was now about to undertake their deliverance, was this absolute God; but rather, that it was in the work of their salvation that his perfections as Absolute were to be surprisingly and surpassingly exhibited. Their redemption was to be a chosen field for the manifestation of his Jehovah attributes. There would be given in it a discovery and demonstration of these surpassing everything that had hitherto been known. And was not *this* glorious comfort to a nation lying in darkness and the shadow of death!

II. THE HISTORICAL EXHIBITION OF THIS CONTRAST. 1. *God revealed as El-Shaddai* (ver. 3). God was made known as El-Shaddai in the birth of Isaac (Rom. iv. 17—22), in the care exercised over the patriarchs in their wanderings (Gen. xxviii. 15), in the provision made for their temporal necessities (Gen. xlv. 5—9), in the increase and preservation of the chosen race in Egypt (Ex. i. 7, 12, 20; iii. 2). This name, however, was inadequate to express the richer aspects and relations of the Divine character brought to light in the Exodus, and in the subsequent experiences of the people. 2. *The transition from El-Shaddai to Jehovah.* Vers. 4—6 narrate the steps by which the way was prepared for the new and higher manifestation. The preparation involved—(1) The establishment of a covenant of promise (ver. 4). If God is revealed as Jehovah when seen acting with unbounded freedom in fulfilment of a purpose, then it was necessary, in order that the freedom and sovereignty of the worker might be rendered completely manifest, that the purpose should be previously declared. Only on the basis of a previously declared purpose could the Jehovah attributes be conspicuously and conclusively displayed. (See interesting remarks on this in Bruce's 'Chief End of Revelation,' ch. iv.) (2) The development of a crisis in the situation of Israel (ver. 5). This crisis was marked on the *human* side by the sufferings of Israel reaching a pitch of intensity which imperatively called for a Divine interposition; and on the *Divine* side, by God arousing himself, and determining himself to interfere on their behalf (ch. ii. 23—25). We have already seen that the bondage was not without Divine permission. We have traced it in—(1) A punishment for sins, (2) A trial of faith, and (3) A

moral preparation. We have now to view in it a situation providentially prepared with the design of affording the fullest possible scope for the display of the truth, grace, power, and all-embracing sovereignty of the great Being who was revealing himself in Israel's history. 3. *God revealed as Jehovah* (vers. 6-9). This revelation would embrace—(1) The deliverance of the people from the bondage and misery of Egypt, and this with great accompaniments of power and judgment (ver. 6). (2) Their adoption by God as a people to himself (ver. 7). (3) Their final settlement in Canaan, in fulfilment of promise (ver. 8). By such deeds would God make it manifest that he was indeed Jehovah, *their* God. He would display his might; would demonstrate his supremacy as Moral Ruler; would magnify his covenant-keeping faithfulness; would reveal himself as the Living Personal God, working freely in history in pursuance of gracious purposes, and, in spite of all human opposition, bringing them to pass.

Lessons:—1. How wonderful to contemplate God in the majesty of his perfections as the Great I Am—the absolute and unconditioned Being! But what language will express the condescension and grace displayed in the stooping down of this absolute Being to enter into covenant engagements with man, even to the extent of binding himself with oaths to fulfil the promises given by his own free goodness. 2. The manifestation of the Jehovah attributes in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt has its higher counterpart in the discovery of them since made in the redemption of men from sin and Satan through Christ. Christ redeems us from sin's burden and from Satan's tyranny. He does this in virtue of the "stretched-out arm" and "mighty judgments" with which, while on earth, he overcame the Prince of the power of this world; himself also enduring the judgment of God in being "made sin for us," "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." By this atonement and victory, in the might of which he has now ascended on high, leading captivity captive, we, being reconciled to God, are formed into a people for his praise, and he becomes our God; the same power that redeemed us working in us to deliver us from sin in our members, and to prepare us for a heavenly inheritance; to which, as the goal of all God's leading of us, the promises immovably point forward (Rom. viii. 1, 2; 2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. iv. 8; Col. i. 12-15; ii. 15; 1 Pet. i. 3-10; ii. 9, 10).—J. O.

Ver. 7.—*A rich promise.* The promise is as rich as it is wonderful, and as wonderful as it is rich—"I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God." It includes—1. *The highest honour.* Who speaks? The absolute God. To whom? A nation of bondsmen. Yet he says—"I will take you," etc. And he did it, even as he still takes sinners in Christ into union and fellowship with himself—adopting them as sons, admitting them to covenant, making them heirs, etc. 2. *The highest privilege.* All promise and all blessing, for time and for eternity, are wrapped up in this single but most comprehensive word—"I will be to you a God." 3. *The most indissoluble of relations.* It lasts through time, and extends into eternity, enduring as long as God and the soul and Christ endure, and that is for ever (cf. Matt. xxii. 31, 32).—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*God encourages Moses in his despondency.* We have here—

I. *Moses QUESTIONING THE PROCEDURE OF JEHOVAH.* Observe—1. *Moses in all his perplexity still acts upon the firm assurance that there is a Jehovah to resort to.* "He returned unto the Lord." Neither the reproaches of the people nor his own disappointment made him at all to doubt that he was dealing with a glorious, awful, and Divine existence outside of himself. It seems just as much a matter of course for Moses to meet with Jehovah, as it had been for the Israelite officers to meet with Moses. This is one good result of all the discussion (for hardly any other term will sufficiently indicate it) which Moses has had with Jehovah concerning his own fitness. Every time God spoke he stood out before the mind of his servant more distinctly and impressively as a real existence. The troubled heart of Moses leads him here into a set of very ignorant questions; but these were a small evil compared with what might have happened, viz. a lapse into utter atheism. 2. *Moses, like the Israelite officers, makes the mistake of going by first consequences.* He does not rebuke the officers for wrong expectations and hasty conclusions. By his language in approaching God, he admits to the full that these officers have reason for their reproaches. They have appealed to Jehovah as *against* Moses; Moses in turn can only appeal to Jehovah, *not against them*, but to

justify himself. How easy it is for a man, even though fully persuaded of God's existence, to have utterly erroneous thoughts of his purposes and of his ways of working. Evidently it will need a gradual process—and not without temporary retrogressions—in order to lift Moses above such conceptions of deity as he had gained in Egypt and Midian, and by all his acquaintance with current idolatries. It is easier to remember the name I AM than to understand the thing signified by the name. 3. *In particular, Moses blundered in thinking of deliverance, not as a process, but as an act*—something to be achieved by a miracle as instantaneous and complete as those which he had wrought before Israel. One of the most pernicious misapprehensions of the Gospel is that which looks on salvation as an instantaneous thing—which speaks of the saved, instead of using the more exact description, “those who are being saved” (Rom. v. 10; 1 Cor. i. 18; Philipp. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 9). First of all, we put our shallow, unspiritual notions into the Word of God, and then turn round in amazement, because his actions do not correspond with our ideas of what they should be. 4. We see from this utterance of Moses, how a man may make the first step towards freedom and Divine fulfilments of gracious purposes to him, and yet not know it. Moses having gone to Pharaoh, had met with nothing but rebuff; and was further compelled to see his brethren treated more cruelly than ever. He thinks nothing has been done, because he can see nothing, but he is utterly mistaken. The Israelites, had they only known it, were nearer salvation—a great deal nearer—than when they first believed. “Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?” says Moses to Jehovah. Wherefore? indeed!—only we should ever ask all important questions in their proper order. First, “*Is it so?*” and then, “*Why is it so?*” It was not true that Jehovah was evilly entreating the people. The liberating work was really begun, even though Moses could see no sign of it. When, from the point of view given by the catastrophe of the Red Sea, we look back on this first interview, then we see that it was also the first step in a solemn gradation—for Moses and Israel, the first step upwards; and just as surely for Pharaoh, the first step downwards.

II. GOD GIVES AN ANSWER FULL OF ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. *Notice the absence of anything in the shape of rebuke.* These words of Moses had a very offensive and dishonouring sound, but we do not read that Jehovah's anger was kindled against Moses (ch. iv. 14), or that he sought to kill him (ch. iv. 24). When there is a want of due and prompt submission to the commandments of God, especially when they are plain and decisive ones, then God begins to threaten. But when the thing lacking is a want of understanding as to God's way, then he patiently extends sympathy, and endeavours to give light and truth. A commander severely punishes a subordinate when he neglects plain orders at a critical juncture; but he would be very unreasonable if he expected him all at once to appreciate the plan of a campaign. Moses would have been very differently treated, if, after the reproaches of the officers, he had shown a spirit of disobedience towards Jehovah. 2. As to the substance of God's reply, what can be said that he has not said already; save that *he puts the old truths and promises more emphatically, more comprehensively than ever?* The first appeal to Moses is, *to rest as far as he can in an undisturbed sense of the power of God.* That power belongs to Jehovah is the one thing which Moses has seen most clearly, felt most deeply; and God began by assuring him that he will yet be convinced how strong the Divine hand is. The strong man, violently and wastefully laying hold of Jehovah's possessions, will be utterly subdued by a far stronger than himself. The next point to be noticed is that though, as we have said, there was no expressed rebuke, yet there are elements in this reply of God, out of which Moses, reflecting on what was expressed, *could construct a rebuke for himself.* Moses is not showing a faith equal to that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and yet they were without the revelation of this name JEHOVAH. Moses, who had been told more of the Divine nature than Abraham was told, ought to have believed not less readily and steadily than Abraham. Rest if you can, Moses, in all the comforts that flow from a due consideration of this great and exhaustless Name! Then God goes on to speak of his own faithfulness, *of the covenant which was constantly in the Divine mind.* Was it for Moses to speak as if God was unmindful of that covenant; he to speak, who but lately had shown his own want of regard to the human side of it, and been in deadly peril because of his uncircumcised soul! The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is Jehovah, the great I AM. If, then, he made a covenant

with all its promises yesterday, be sure that to-day he is doing something to carry that covenant out. If, yesterday, he expressed compassion for the oppressed, and wrath with the oppressor, be sure that he has not relapsed into cold indifference to-day. These capricious sympathies are reserved for men and women who will weep over the mimic and exaggerated sorrows of the stage, and then go home to harden their hearts against the terrible sorrows of real life. When we read over the words of Moses here, and compare them with the words of God, we see how contracted were the views of Moses, and how gloriously enlarged were the views of God. Moses is thinking simply of deliverance—how to get the present generation from under the yoke of the oppressor; but God has in his mind a great plan, of which the deliverance from Pharaoh is but one stage in the development, and that a very brief stage. To the completion of this plan the liberation of Israel was necessary, and therefore this liberation would assuredly be achieved. Moses, so to speak, was low down in a hollow; he could get no proper view of the distances; he could not get a due impression of all this tract of time, from God's first appearing to Abraham down to the securing of the inheritance; and therefore he may well be excused if he speaks hastily. But God looks down from his throne in eternity. The whole stretch of the work lies before him, and thus beholding it, he can but reiterate his promises, exhibit the great features of his plan, and counsel Moses and Israel to do the one thing needful, *i.e.* continue obediently waiting upon him in the generation in which they live. Let us do what God tells us, being perfectly sure that he sees what we cannot see, and that, because he is the God who cannot lie, he sets all things before us just as they are. 3. Another thing is to be considered here, which, though omitted from Jehovah's answer to Moses, ought not to be neglected by us. For typical purposes, the welfare and future of Israel is the great thing spoken of; Pharaoh is looked at simply as the cruel adversary and oppressor of Israel. Hence just those things are stated which most effectively show his complete downfall. But we must remember that the things which are stated at any particular time are only a small part of what are in the mind of God. He states not all the considerations which inspire his acts, but only such as it may be well for us to know. Pharaoh had to be dealt with as a *man*, even though the record is emphatically constructed so as to set him forth merely as a *type*. It would have been manifestly unjust to bring upon him sudden and terrible destruction of all his power, without an appearance of appeal to his voluntary action.—Y.

Vers. 2—8.—*The message to afflicted Israel.* I. THE WORD TO THE LEADER: vers. 2—5. The message must be from faith to faith. The heart of God's servant must first be revived ere he can impart strength to the people. 1. He is reminded of God's faithfulness: "I am Jehovah." We cannot grasp this truth without deliverance from fear. 2. The darkness will only make God's glory shine out the more resplendently. Their present sufferings will mark a new era in God's revelation of himself. Known before as the Almighty, he will now reveal himself as Jehovah, "the faithful One," who remembers and fulfils his promises. 3. Having grasped the truth regarding God's faithfulness he is led back to the promises by which the Lord has bound himself. 4. The assurance of present sympathy and speedy deliverance. He has heard their groaning and called to remembrance his pledged word. To dwell in these truths is to possess light and power. God's word will then be a joy to our hearts, and will be in our lips consolation and strength for the fainting ones around us.

II. THE WORD TO THE PEOPLE: vers. 6—8. 1. It is shut in between the reiterated assurance, "*I am Jehovah*," vers. 6—9. For them, too, the truth to rest in is God's faithfulness. 2. The deliverance will be accompanied by the revelation of God's terribleness (ver. 6). Israel never forgot those days, and never will. 3. God will wed them to himself. He does not deliver us and then leave us: "I will take you to me for a people and I will be to you a God." 4. He will fulfil all the promises and give them the land for a heritage. This is the Gospel message: Our bonds will be broken—God will bind us to himself and give us his people's heritage. Have we received it? Is it a living hope, an abiding joy to us?—U.

Vers. 2—3.—*The Lord thy God is one God.* God appeared to the fathers of the race under one name; to their successors under another. *Name* is more than *title*; it is the

character, or aspect of character, denoted by the title. Jehovah would seem to have been a title of God before the time of Moses; but to him, and to the Israelites through him, was first revealed that aspect of the Divine character which explained and justified the title. Notice—

I. ONE MAY KNOW GOD WITHOUT KNOWING ALL ABOUT HIM. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob certainly knew God. They believed in him as an Almighty Ruler—one who was ruling them, and who would fulfil his promise to them. His power and his trustworthiness were the characteristics they most relied on. Their faith centred in his name El-Shaddai, and as a living practical faith it tended to secure the righteousness for which—as seed for fruit—it was reckoned. [*Illustration*:—Certain medicines, in earlier years, were trusted and used successfully to produce certain effects; yet other uses remained unknown until long afterwards.] God was trusted by the patriarchs to the extent of their then knowledge, though they knew nothing of other characteristics which were to be afterwards revealed.

II. WE MAY KNOW GOD UNDER DIFFERENT ASPECTS, AND YET KNOW THE SAME GOD. No doubt the revelation of a new name, the fixing of the attention upon a new aspect of the Divine character, must have been, at first, somewhat startling to those who held by the old traditions. Those taught to believe in El-Shaddai may have held the new believers in Jehovah unorthodox. Yet both, in so far as their belief was genuine, knew and trusted the same God. Jehovah was El-Shaddai only viewed from a new standpoint. There was no contradiction between the two names—one God owned both.

III. WE MAY EXPECT AS THE OLD ORDER CHANGES TO VIEW GOD UNDER OTHER THAN THE OLD CONDITIONS. The new revelation resulted from new conditions. The old order having changed, a new standpoint was necessitated, whence God must be viewed under a new aspect. [*Illustration*:—The properties of a medicine are discovered little by little, as new diseases cause it to be applied in different ways.] New conditions must result in new discoveries as to the “properties” of God.

Application:—God is one, Truth is one; yet God and Truth are many-sided—we see them differently according to the position which we occupy. Some people are in a great hurry to denounce all novelty as heresy; but *novelty* may mean nothing more than a new point of view, whereas *heresy* results from distorted vision; it sees wrongly, through personal idiosyncrasy, that which, from the same standpoint, is seen clearly by the clear-eyed. We do well to suspect ourselves when our conclusions differ from those of others. We may test such conclusions in two ways:—1. What are the conditions under which they have been arrived at? If the conditions have changed, we may expect the conclusions to be different. 2. Do they *contradict* old beliefs? If so, they should be suspected—or, Do they merely embrace them within a wider faith? If so, they may sufficiently justify themselves. We may expect new revelations, but we must not hurriedly accept novelties. New names will be made known, but they are never really *inconsistent* with the old.—G.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 9.—Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. The Israelites, who had expected a speedy deliverance, and found themselves only the more down-trodden for Moses' interference, were too much dispirited to be cheered even by the gracious promises and assurances which Moses was commissioned to give. They had no longer any trust in one who they thought had deceived them. He was a dreamer, a visionary, if no worse. They did not intend hearkening to him any more. “Anguish of spirit” possessed their souls, and “cruel bondage” claimed their bodies, day after day. They had not even the time, had they had the will, to hearken.

Ver. 9.—Anguish of spirit. Literally, “shortness.” Compare Job xxi. 4. Their spirit was shortened—they had lost all heart, as we say, so cruel had been their disappointment. The contrast between their feelings now, and when Moses first addressed them (ch. iv. 31), is strong, but “fully accounted for by the change of circumstances” (Cook). Cruel bondage. Bondage, i.e., far more oppressive and continuous than it had been (ch. v. 9–14). The Samaritan version adds: “And they said to him. Let us alone, and let us serve the Egyptians: for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than die in a wilderness,” an addition which receives some support from ch. xiv. 12.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*Spiritual deadness produced by extreme physical need.* It is the worst result of long-continued oppression that it brings its victims into a state of apathy. Servile insurrections are rare—servile wars all but unknown. Slavery so crushes men, so brutalises, so deadens them, that they lose all heart, all spirit, all hope, almost all feeling. Defenders of slavery call the proper objects of the “institution” *live machines*; and “live machines” is exactly what it tends to make them. What is to stir a mass so sluggish and inert that it vegetates rather than lives? Not the name of God (ver. 3). It falls on closed ears—it has no meaning to them, conveys no idea, arouses no thought. Not the mention of a covenant (vers. 4, 5). They cannot realise so complex a notion—cannot understand what the word means. Not promises (vers. 6—8). A promise has no power unless embraced by faith; and the down-trodden have no faith, either in themselves or in others. So the most stirring appeals are made in vain—the brightest hopes and prospects presented to no purpose. And as with oppression, so with all extreme depression and destitution. Hopeless poverty, constant battle with the wolf at the door, continual striving to keep off starvation from themselves, their wives, and children, reduces a population to a condition in which it becomes dead to spiritual things, and not only appears to be, but is, unimpressible. It is so occupied with the cares of this life that it has no thought for another. It has bid farewell to hope, and with hope to fear. It is reckless. The preacher can do nothing with it until he has changed the physical conditions of its existence. He must first address himself to the people’s physical wants. Let these be provided for, let the struggle for existence slacken, let hope dawn on the despairing souls, and all will at once be different. As the unbound earth opens to receive seed at the genial breath of spring, so these torpid souls may be brought to take in the seed of life, by having their bodies warmed and clothed and cared for.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 11, vi. 13.—*The new commission.* And Moses spoke so, etc.: Exod. vi. 9.

I. THE AUDACITY OF FAITH. Describe the *treatment* of Moses and Aaron. They acted under Divine direction, did their very best, but just because everything did not go well instantly, and that through the frowardness and waywardness of others, the people turned upon them, and upbraided them as accessories to their slavery. [See Matt. Henry for some valuable practical notes on this and other parts of this passage from ch. v. 22—vi. 13.] Moses felt this keenly, and in a moral sense *retreated* upon his base—that is, upon God. Compare Hezekiah and the letter. Alone with God, Moses *complained*. Moses is very bold—tells God to his face that he has not delivered Israel at all; that he has brought evil upon the nation, already oppressed to the border of despair; and challenges the Eternal as to his own commission. All this is high tragedy in the realms of spiritual life, and may well demand consideration. Consider—I. *The audacity* of Moses. See chap. v. 22, 23. Is this the language of enquiry or entreaty? Not at all. Of impetuosity, of remonstrance; it borders on the irreverent; the tone is angry, and nearly rebellious. [Note—Such a speech as this would never have been put into the mouth of Moses by any later writer—sure mark this, that we have the history under the hand of Moses.] Such expressions are not uncommon with Old Testament saints. See especially Jer. xx. 7, *et seq.* We learn that believers do not stand related to God as stones lying under a cast-iron canopy of destiny. They are quivering sensibilities in the presence of the Father of spirits. What they feel, they may say; better to say it. And if an earthly parent will make allowances for an angry, misapprehending child, shall not our Father in heaven? “Let us therefore come *boldly*,” etc. 2. *The error* of Moses. God was all the time working in the direction of salvation for the people and of extraordinary eminence for Moses; but he thought everything looked the other way. A similar error may be ours. 3. *The accomplishment of the Divine purpose in Moses.* To draw him away from all secondary causes, to dependence on and communion with God.

II. THE CONDESCENDING FORBEARANCE OF GOD. In answer to the cry of Moses, God made five announcements of the very first importance. They were made with

distinctness, formality, and solemnity. Note—There may have been an interval of months between the cry and these announcements. Note also, that this is not a second account of the revelation of the Burning Bush. The true explanation of the likeness between the two revelations is, that Moses having fallen into a desponding state of mind, God recalled to him first principles. So now, one cure at least for discouragement is to fall back on elemental Gospel truths. God announced—1. *His resolve*: ver. 1, see Hebrew; and expound the true meaning. Pharaoh would be forced, not only to “send” Israel out, but to “drive” them out. 2. *His name*. First, God gave again his proper name, “Jehovah;” and then we have a positive and a negative declaration—(1) Positive. To the fathers God had been known as El-Shaddai—God all-sufficient—that is, to and for them in their moving tents. (2) Negative. This may not mean that “Jehovah” had never fallen on their ear; but this, that all in that name had not dawned on their intelligence. God’s revelation of himself is always gradual. So it is in the gradual unfolding of the successive Bible economies. And so it is still. Modern science cannot give us a different idea of God; but an enlarged idea, and one vastly illuminated. Dr. Chalmers when delivering his “Astronomical Discourses” had a grander idea of God than John Milton. Geology tells us of the æons through which he works. Microscopical revelations tell of the infinitude of his condescensions. As Diderot said: “Elargissez Dieu”—Enlarge your idea of God. 3. *His covenant*: ver. 4. 4. *His sympathy*: ver. 5. With new sorrows. 5. *His salvation*: vers. 6, 7, 8. It is impossible to read these verses without noting the parallel with a still greater salvation. God promised—(1) *Deliverance*. Note the “burden-bearing” (see the Heb.) of sin—its essential servitude—the redemption price—the power, the outstretched arm, with which salvation is wrought—the judgment on powers of darkness, Col. ii. 15. (2) *Adoption*. (3) *The land of rest*. These blessings for us, as for them, on the condition of implicit trust.

III. THE DEAFENING POWER OF SORROW: ver. 9. The contrast now and ch. iv. 31. “On a former occasion the people were comparatively at ease, accustomed to their lot, sufficiently afflicted to long for deliverance, and sufficiently free in spirit to hope for it.” Now!—ver. 9. Observe the Heb., “shortness of breath,” i.e. such as comes with anguish; or may not the meaning be, “shortness of spirit,” as we say “shortness of temper”? This verse is against the theory that Israel, by sheer force of religious enthusiasm, emancipated itself. For them, as for us, no salvation save in Jehovah their God. Sorrow may shut out comfort. How many mistakenly stay away from the sanctuary because of their grief!

IV. THE PERSISTENCE OF THE DELIVERING GOD. In this extremity of woe, God appears. The demand once was for a three days’ absence; now God uncovers all his purpose. Ver. 11 is the ultimatum of God. This new commission overwhelms Moses with a deeper sense of incompetence. He pleads—1. *The aversion of his own people*. Effective homiletic use may here be made of the fact, that much of the strength of ministers, which might be used against the enemies of God, is used in dealing with the frowardness of his professed friends. 2. *His own infirmity*. There may be here a sense of moral unfitness—“uncircumcised lips”—and a latent reference to the disobedience, ch. iv. 24–26. God did not allow these pleas; but put the two leaders forward once more into the position of responsibility, peril, and honour (ver. 13).—R.

Ver. 9.—*The pains of the lower life shutting out the blessings of the higher one.* “They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.” Notice that this reason, and not some other, is stated for the indifference of Israel to the glorious words which Moses was commanded to repeat to them. We might fairly have expected some other reason to be stated; as, for instance, “We have been deceived once, and are not again to be put off with fair words;” or, “This array of promises is very grand and imposing, but there is nothing in them.” But they are emphatically represented as not even attending to what Moses had to say. Their minds were effectually closed by preoccupation with something else. They were so much harassed in body and mind as to lack not only the inclination, but even the ability, to give Moses a proper hearing. And so Pharaoh’s policy had this effect at least, that it prevented the people, for a while, from considering things belonging to their highest welfare. Only we must bear in mind that as the liberating advance of God was not in the least hindered by the cruelty of Pharaoh, so neither was it hindered by the negligence of Israel. A

Pharaoh could not hinder, so the people could neither help nor hinder. When they were yet without strength, utterly without strength, in due time God intervened to deliver them.

I. There is thus suggested to us how we should keep in mind ONE GREAT CAUSE OF HINDRANCE TO THE GOSPEL. A message like that of the Gospel of Christ finds great difficulty in its way from preoccupation of any kind, seeing that the mind of man cannot properly entertain two great topics of thought at the same time. Some one thing must hold a first place in thought; and when the heart is occupied with the presence of worldly cares, whatever form they take, then it must be peculiarly hard for the Gospel to find a foothold. God, when he seeks love and service from us, looks to find his rivals in ambition, in pleasure, in riches; and we are used to hear frequent warnings against these rivals. But what rival is more dangerous than (say) *poverty*, that cleaving, biting, pinching spirit, which, when once it gets hold of a man, never lets him forget that it is near. What chance is there then to bring out of the heart a deep conviction of sin and spiritual need? The difficulties of getting the natural man to attend to spiritual concerns are immensely increased by poverty as well as by riches. If, upon some considerations, it is seen to be hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, upon other considerations it is seen to be equally hard for the poor. The poor have the Gospel presented to them, but alas! it is often hard work to persuade them that it is a Gospel. Go to them, and how are you often met? It may be that your very exemption from a life-long struggle for daily bread blinds you to their peculiar difficulties. You are not able to see that grim wolf which is incessantly at the door, and never out of their thoughts. What wonder if at first—and indeed habitually—the poor should think that there is little or nothing in religion! Often they show their feeling very plainly by bitter and savage words. They want a gospel; but not your gospel. They do not care for a gospel which, while it makes large offers, makes also large demands. They do not care to be asked for self-denial, self-respect, contentment, and patient submission to hard conditions which cannot be easily or immediately altered. They want a gospel which will give, and give just what they choose to ask. The privations, the struggles, the agonies of the poor reduce them often nearer to the spirit of wild beasts than of human beings. Give them what indulges their appetites, and they will welcome you. Minister to the cravings of the flesh, and they will wait as long as you are disposed to supply. But proclaim unpalatable truths, and you might as well speak in a wilderness. We might pursue a similar line of thought in considering the anguish of spirit and cruel bondage of *heathendom*. The missionary often has to speak to those whose minds are oppressed with terrible visions of deities who can only be propitiated by laborious and agonising penances. Read what is said concerning the life-long austerities of some Hindoo devotees, and then consider whether you have not in them a bondage of spirit which may only too effectually shut out even the most attractive truths of the Gospel. We might speak also of the cruel bondage of *worldly conventions*; the incessant and weary struggle to keep up social position—a struggle which, however ridiculous it may be made to look, is, in the eyes of multitudes, a great necessity. And if a man feels a thing a necessity, then you must, at least in your first approaches to him, treat it as a necessity. And last, but not least, there is the anguish and bondage of *disease, physical pain, perhaps approaching death*. The sick send, or are supposed to send, for ministers of religion, but how plain it is in the great bulk of instances that such resorts are utterly ineffectual to bring the sick person to God! There may be an appearance of repentance, a pretence of understanding the way of salvation; but when we know that the actual motive is the fear of death, and not the bitter consciousness of sin, then we cannot but distrust all the action following upon the motive. When a human being, in youth, in health, and with the prospect of a long life, professes to be smitten with convictions of sin, and begins to seek for a Saviour, we know where we are in considering his position. His apparent motive has everything in the circumstances to approve itself as a real one. But when the appearance of interest in Divine things only comes consequent on the alarms of a dangerous, perhaps a fatal illness, then we suspect that the cry for salvation is a selfish and ignorant one; and how can we be sure that it will be anything but a vain one? A courteous pretence of listening to the message of God when there is no real apprehension of it is practically the same thing as not listening at all.

II. NOTE THE OBJECTION WHICH IS BROUGHT AGAINST THE GOSPEL FROM ITS INABILITY

TO DEAL IMMEDIATELY WITH ALL THIS ANGUISH AND BONDAGE OF MEN. There is a plausible argument—one very frequently urged, and alas! very easily deceiving—that the Gospel of Christ does nothing immediately for the social improvement of the world. What is more common than the cry, when some hideous blot and ulcer of society is suddenly revealed, “Here we stand, having only got so far, after more than eighteen centuries of Christianity!” And in hearing talk of this kind, which is sometimes sincere, but oftener is mere cant, we have not so much to reply to others as to enlighten and reassure ourselves. How easily it might have been said with respect to these Israelites, “God is no deliverer, else he would at once take these people—this living, suffering generation—out of all their pains.” What God might have done we cannot tell; we only know what he actually did. The light of the whole transaction shows that Jehovah was unquestionably a deliverer; that however a single generation might suffer, the whole nation was in due time, and at the best time, fully redeemed. And in like manner, by the consideration of ultimate results as well as present experiences, we gain the assurance that God is truly the deliverer of men from all spiritual bondage, all spiritual pain. Our frequent folly as defenders of the faith is in saying more than there is any need to say. Let us keep within safe, practical, provable assertions, and these will give an answer enough for the present need. The Gospel of Christ, *we know*, does something, *immediately*, for every one who, in response to its great invitation, believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Real belief in him will at once irradiate the meanest hovel, the most squalid circumstances, with a light which may most truly be described as

The light that never was on sea or land.

No combination of favourable social surroundings will ever bring that light; nothing will bring it but the soul's own free and intelligent admission of Jesus as Saviour and Lord. His presence thus obtained gives joy in the midst of the bitterest anguish, liberty in the midst of the most grinding bondage. The more that people believe in Christ, the more we shall have of his effectual presence in the world; and the more we have of his effectual presence, the nearer we shall come to that perpetual summer when the ice that now wraps so many human hearts will be utterly and lastingly melted away. Social reformers who are not also humble Christians, with all their pretensions and all their zeal, are only touching secondary causes; relieving symptoms without cutting at the root of disease. No human being ever did or ever will get clear of anguish and bondage except by submitting to Christ. And no one ever submitted to Christ without having the certain assurance given, that in due time all sorrow and sighing would for ever flee away.—Y.

EXPOSITION

Vers. 10—12.—The Israelites having shown themselves, for the time, unimpressible, God commands Moses to make his next effort upon the Pharaoh. He is to enter into his presence once more, and demand, without circumlocution or obscurity, that the Israelites be allowed to quit the land (ver. 11). Moses, however, demurs. He had done God's will with respect to the people readily and at once, expecting that, as he had persuaded them before, so he would a second time. But he had been disappointed; the people had refused to listen to him. Immediately all his original self-distrust and diffidence recurred—even the old form of diffidence, distrust of his ability to persuade men (ch. iv. 10). How shall he expect to persuade Pharaoh, who had already rejected him (ch. v. 2—5), when he had just failed with his own countrymen, who

previously had “believed” his report (ch. iv 31)?

Ver. 11.—**Out of his land.** Note the advance in the demand. No longer is there any limitation to a three days' journey, as at first (ch. iii. 18; v. 3). The children of Israel are to be let go altogether “out of the land.” So generally, if God lays a light burthen upon us and we refuse it, we may expect him to exchange our light burthen for a heavier one. We had better accept the first cross he offers.

Ver. 12.—**Uncircumcised lips**, i.e. “lips inefficient for the purpose for which lips are given;” as “uncircumcised ears” are ears that cannot hearken (Jer. vi. 10), and an “uncircumcised heart” a heart that cannot understand (*ib.* ix. 26). The meaning is the same as in ch. iv. 10, where Moses says that he is “slow of speech and of a slow tongue.” Nothing can be determined from the expression as to the exact cause of the imperfection of which complaint is made.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 11.—*The servant of God must labour unceasingly.* Scarcely has Moses made one attempt at service and failed than God requires of him another service. "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh." In the career of God's servants there is "no rest, no pause." Failure here must be redeemed by effort there. And in this unceasing continuance of service one thing is especially remarkable. After failure, not a lighter but a heavier duty is commonly imposed on men. If they prove unable to convince their kindred, they are given a mission to strangers; if they fail with men of low degree, they are appointed to preach to princes. God will have them redeem failure by fresh effort. God knows the causes of their failure, and introduces them to new spheres, where those causes will not operate, or operate less. A man who has failed in a humble sphere not unfrequently succeeds in a higher one. The servant of God must not care greatly about the sphere to which he is called, but seek to do his best in each while he remains in it. He will thus—1. Be always labouring for God; 2. Be always exercising and so improving his own mental and spiritual gifts; and 3. Be of far more benefit to others than if he sat idle half his time waiting for such a call as seemed to him altogether fitting and suitable. "The time is short." We must "work while it is day—the night cometh when no man can work."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 9—14, 28—30.—*Shaken faith, and an unshaken purpose.* In these verses we have—

I. A PAINFUL RESULT OF AFFLICTIVE PROVIDENCE. The children of Israel, hard-driven by their taskmasters, and sunk in misery, were so stupefied with sorrow, as to have no longer any heart for their cheering tidings brought to them by Moses. Their despair had its ground in unbelief. They judged Moses a deceiver. They had trusted him before, and they reflected that the only outcome of it had been this unprecedented aggravation of their wretchedness. His fine promises must now go for what they were worth; they were past deriving comfort from them! Yet observe how in all this—1. They *wronged God*. God had not deserted them as they thought. He was on the very eve of fulfilling every promise he had made them. We see the error in *their case*; it would be well if we could always see it as clearly in our own. 2. *Made their trials harder*. For if trials are hard enough to bear even *with* faith in the goodness and help of God, how much harder are they to bear *without* it! 3. *Shut themselves out from Divinely-sent consolation*. Their despondency led them to refuse the very message which would have given them relief. How often is the same thing witnessed under severe affliction! There is a kind of perversity in grief, which leads it to "refuse to be comforted." God is mistrusted. The heart abandons itself to its despair. It sinks in gloom and wretchedness. It turns the very truth of God into a lie, and refuses Scripture and Gospel consolations. Unhappy condition! And as foolish as unhappy—for God is never nearer to the suffering spirit, never more ready to hear its cry, probably never nearer bringing it deliverance, than just when it is thus shutting out his consolations, and refusing him its confidence.

II. TYPICAL DISCOURAGEMENTS IN SPIRITUAL SERVICE (vers. 9, 13, 30). Moses was sorely discouraged—1. *At the unbelieving despair of the people*. He could make no impression on them. They seemed hardened in their misery. So swallowed up were they in their grief, so crushed with sorrow, that their minds seemed to have lost all elasticity, all power of responding to the gladdest of tidings. This is a difficulty one has often to contend with in spiritual work—the spiritless, despairing condition induced by long experience of misfortune. The city missionary, *e.g.*, has frequently to encounter it in going among the dwellings of the very poor. His heart sickens as he realises how little chance his Gospel has of finding acceptance in homes where all the surroundings are wretched, and where from year's end to year's end, there is being carried on the same heartless, monotonous "struggle for existence." But this insensibility to religion induced by suffering is not peculiar to the poor. Far from it. You will find it wherever men are sore beset with trouble, and have no firm, rooted faith in God to support them under it.

Absorbed in "the sorrow of the world," they have no ear for spiritual comfort, and almost spurn it as a mockery. 2. *At the prospect of having to go again before Pharaoh.* Having failed with the people, how should he hope to prevail with Pharaoh, emboldened as that monarch would be with the success of a previous refusal? The element of discouragement here is the depressing sense of *failure*. Moses had failed in the part of the work which seemed easiest, and in which on the former occasion he had succeeded; how, then, should he look for success in the more difficult part of it, where previously he had sustained defeat? Observe carefully that on this point Moses' plea was not admitted. (1) We are bad judges of what *is* failure. What Moses counted defeats were not defeats at all, but at most delays. The history of missions furnishes striking illustrations of the danger of too hastily concluding that a work has failed because no immediate fruits are visible. Nothing has been more common in missionary experience (South Seas, Madagascar, Tinnively, the Kohls, etc.) than times of extraordinary fruitfulness following upon long periods of seeming failure—ten, twenty, thirty years often passing without a single convert. These were seasons of trial of faith, and had the missions been abandoned, as timid counsellors advised, the whole blessing would have been lost. (2) It is the *doing* of our duty we are held responsible for, not the failure or success which may attend it. That remains with God. The lesson is that in spiritual work there must be no talk of abandonment; no putting of the hand to the plough and then looking back; no flinging away of our weapons because the outlook is discouraging. *Our part is to labour on, believing that "in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. vi. 9).* 3. *By the revived sense of personal deficiencies.* "How then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips!" Moses had Aaron, it was true, to speak for him, but there was a certain clumsiness in this method of two men going in, the one to speak for the other, and Moses felt his deficiency only the more keenly on account of it. He seems to have despaired of having any influence with Pharaoh, who would look on him with contempt. Moses forgot that in work of this kind no man "goeth a warfare any time at his own charges" (1 Cor. ix. 7), and that, if God sent him, God would qualify and support him, would give him strength for every duty he had to perform (cf. ch. vii. 1—7).

III. **GOD'S UNSHAKEN PURPOSE ASSERTING ITSELF IN THE MIDST OF HUMAN UNBELIEF AND INFIRMITY** (vers. 11, 13, 29). This is a most remarkable feature in the narrative—how, high and clear above all notes of doubt and hesitancy on the side of man, and at the very time when things are wearing their most untoward aspect, God expresses himself with perfect decision as to the deliverance of the people. Hope in the hearts of the people seemed extinct; even the faith of a Moses was staggering at the obstacles to be encountered. These fears and tremblings, however, are all on the human side; he who names himself Jehovah is raised infinitely above them, and has clearly in his view not only the certainty of his purpose being fulfilled, but all the steps by which the fulfilment is to be brought about. How should this give us confidence when we are trembling for the cause of Truth! We cannot see the end from the beginning, but Jehovah can, and we can stay ourselves on *his* knowledge of what is dark to *us*. It is enough for us to know that no contingency can arise which he is not aware of and has not prepared himself to cope with; that no opposition can erect itself against his counsel, which it is not within his power to overthrow. The counsel of the Lord stands for ever—the one stable fact in the midst of earthly vicissitude and change, of all ebb and flow of human hopes and fears. That surely is enough to lean upon, in the dark and troubled hours of our own and of the world's existence.

IV. **FRESH EVIDENCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE DELIVERANCE.** Allusion has already been made to the theory that the Exodus had its origin, not in a supernatural interposition of God, but in some gigantic spiritual movement springing up among the people themselves. The facts in this chapter, if anything of the character of history belongs to them, conclusively dispose of that theory. So far from the people of Israel being in a state of hopeful enthusiasm, ready to make great efforts for their own deliverance, they appear as utterly crushed and broken-spirited—totally "without strength." There was doubtless a profound purpose in God's permitting them to be brought into this condition. 1. It made more manifest the fact that their deliverance did *not* originate with themselves. And 2. It furnishes a striking image of Gospel truth. We too were "without strength" when, "in due time, Christ died for the

ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). There was the want of will as well as of power to do anything of ourselves. God has interposed, and done all for us.—J. O.

Ver. 10—chap. vii. 7.—*The uncircumcised lips.* I. "UNCIRCUMCISED LIPS." *Enquire what the significance of this strange expression may be, as coming from Moses.* It can hardly have been a current proverbial phrase adopted for the occasion by Moses, as a still more forcible statement of what he had said before on his felt inability as a speaker. There is no reason to suppose that up to this time there was any such feeling among the Israelites as would originate the expression "uncircumcised lips." They had, indeed, in one instance professed themselves very tenacious of the outward form (Gen. xxiv. 15), but a general appreciation of the inward and spiritual meaning of this form was not to be expected. Hence we may take these words of Moses as giving a fresh, original and emphatic expression of how deeply Moses felt himself lacking in qualification for this serious enterprise. And evidently also, Moses was doing more than give a forcible variation of the old tale. The new expression goes deeper in its significance than "slow of speech and slow of tongue." It indicates that Moses had been pondering, as indeed he had reason to ponder, the meaning of circumcision. Circumcision was a separating sign, the sign of a peculiar destiny and inheritance, of peculiar duties and privileges. But so far it seemed only to have produced outward separation without inward differences, differences of feeling and disposition. Moses could not see that circumcision had done anything to give him ability for his peculiar task. His way of speaking may therefore be taken as a sign of advance in his appreciation of what was necessary to do Jehovah's work. Hitherto his great concern had been because of natural defects in mere organs of action. He had not thought so much of what was lacking in the life that lay behind the organs, and acted through them. But now we gain some hint that Moses sees what is really wanted. The thing wanted is not simply to be lifted up to the level of men who have all natural qualifications for effective speech, but to be lifted altogether above the ordinary level. Though Moses was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," others were not; but they were all of "uncircumcised lips." Moses, we may take it, has now got beyond the personal reluctance which actuated him in his pleas at Horeb. The avengers of the slain Egyptian no longer frown upon him from the horizon of memory. But now comes in this new plea, urged in a worthier spirit, and with a mournful consciousness of its permanent force. It is a plea which is not a mere excuse, but possesses more of the dignity of a reason.

II. JEHOVAH IN HIS REPLY MAKES NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO THIS CIRCUMCISION OF THE LIPS. When Moses aforetime had spoken of his vocal defects, God at once reminded him that defects of this sort were beyond human responsibility, and he also indicated the clear provision through Aaron for the supply of them. Here, indeed, he again takes the opportunity of repeating to Moses that so far as vocal defects are concerned, Aaron will amply compensate for them. But as to the lips being uncircumcised, while this is indeed true, *it is a state of things which does not bear upon the present need.* Suppose the lips are circumcised—that is, suppose that Moses in his words is brought into full sympathy with the purposes of God—it will make no difference in the immediate results. Pharaoh's heart is being hardened; his ears are being closed. It matters not with what purity, simplicity, devotion, and faithfulness we speak, if we speak to that which is insensible. Let us by all means blame ourselves for the faulty way in which we speak and live the message of God, but *our faults do not account for the indifference and the rejections of other men.* These faults bring us under censure for our unfaithfulness, but they do not excuse the unbeliever for his neglect. If but one clear word concerning Jesus be spoken—spoken only once—it is enough to fix responsibility on the auditor. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." If ever being on earth spoke with circumcised lips, it was Jesus himself, yet how idly fell all his solemn, weighty, truthful words upon the ear of Pharisee and Sadducee. Moses will have blame enough by-and-by, first, cruel and undeserved blame from Israel; and next, the censure and penalty from Jehovah for the lapse at Meribah. At present, though he is speaking of an unquestionable defect, he is speaking of it in a premature and inapplicable way. He must indeed know the circumcision of the lip and of all other natural faculties; for this is consequent on the circumcision of the heart. But the great object of all this circumcision is not to

secure his acceptance with Pharaoh or with any other sinful or rebellious man. It is rather to secure his acceptance with God, and especially his full enjoyment of all that comes through this acceptance.

III. **JEHOVAH POINTS OUT THE WAY IN WHICH PHARAOH SHALL BE EFFECTUALLY BROUGHT TO SUBMISSION.** 1. *In the sight of Pharaoh, Moses is to become a God.* In effect Pharaoh has said that Jehovah is no God, and in his heart he thinks Moses a presumptuous impostor. Pharaoh is therefore in a state of mind in which it is impossible to reveal Jehovah to him, but Moses in his own person shall set forth—shall incarnate, so to speak—all that Pharaoh can understand or needs to understand of the Divine power. He shall be compelled to respect the ever-increasing power of Moses. He may hate it, he may make some attempts to resist it, but at the same time the very force of circumstances will bear it in on his mind as a tremendous reality. He shall see how all these successive devastations of his land are connected in some inscrutable way with the presence of Moses and the waving of his rod. Whatever the blindness of his heart so that seeing he does not perceive, he will be obliged to perceive that the strength of Moses does not lie in any visible, terrestrial forces. With all his obduracy, Pharaoh has a certain sense of awe before Moses, and doubtless this is the reason why no attempt is made to treat the person of Moses with violence. 2. *Notice the way in which God here applies the method of mediation.* Moses was not a mediator as from Pharaoh upwards to Jehovah, but he was a mediator from Jehovah downwards to Pharaoh. God thus seizes upon the disposition among the ignorant to venerate inscrutable power. Pharaoh will not listen to Moses speaking, but when the signs begin, and especially when they advance far beyond anything which his own magicians can simulate, he is ready to look on Moses as having something of a Divine nature. God looked for the impressible part in Pharaoh's mind and found it here. The way in which Pharaoh evidently came to regard Moses (God's word in ver. 1 being the voucher for the feeling) is illustrated by the attitude towards Paul and Barnabas of the Lystrans (Acts xiv. 8—13) and towards Paul of the Melitans (Acts xxviii. 6). 3. *Notice how God lays emphasis on Pharaoh's continued indifference to any verbal message.* "Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you." The thoughts of Moses are to be turned away more and more from his own lips or from any other faculty. He is to see that the great antagonists in this contest—even though he is made as a God to Pharaoh—are Jehovah and Pharaoh themselves. It is necessary that Pharaoh should have ample opportunity to show the extent of his passive strength, how long and how stiffly he can resist the constraints of Divine omnipotence. God stoops to a patient struggle with this obdurate monarch that he may thereby present, to all who read the Scriptures, an illustration of the complete way in which his power deals with the most stubborn assertions of human power. The Israelites, even with all their sufferings, had as yet seen only a part of what Pharaoh could do. They had seen him in cruel action; they had also to see him in stolid endurance. So Moses had seen signs of Divine power; but he had yet to see that power itself in extensive and awful operation. On the one hand Pharaoh is to be revealed, bringing out all his resources again and again, until at last they are swallowed in the catastrophe of the Red Sea. Then, he is done with, but the operations of Divine power are only as it were beginning. It is a great matter that we should thus see the powers arrayed against God, working at the utmost of their strength; that we may feel how immeasurably the power of God transcends them.—Y.

Vers. 9—12.—*The contagion of despair.* I. **ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF THE PROFFERED CONSOLATION.** They hearkened not "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." 1. The sympathy of the Word of God. Their case stated not only fairly but with infinite compassion. 2. Israel's folly. Their anguish is permitted to stand between them and God their only helper—their sickness between them and the great Physician; multitudes will not hear because they have no sense of need, and multitudes again because their need is so very great. Israel in their folly typical: (1) The poor—"the lapsed masses." (2) Those passing through heavy trial. (3) The bereaved. (4) Those battling despairingly with besetting sin. How often have these no ear for the rich consolations of the promises of God!

II. **THE WEAKNESS OF MOSES.** 1. Failure among his own people crushes utterly hope of success among strangers and foes. If Israel will not hear, who have everything

to gain, will Pharaoh, who has everything to lose? 2. The old sense of his insufficiency again overpowers him. Deaf ears, unmoved hearts, unconsecrated lives in the Church, paralyse the preacher in his appeals to those that are without.—U

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 13—27.—At this point the narrative is interrupted. The author, or (it may be) the final compiler—perhaps Joshua—thought it desirable to insert here a genealogical section, taking up the *family* history of Israel from the point at which it was left in ch. i. 5, where the sons of Jacob were enumerated. The whole political system of Israel was based upon the tribal relation; and it was of the last importance, politically, to hand down the divisions and subdivisions of families. The lists here given, probably prepared by Moses in a separate document, had to be inserted somewhere. The present seemed a fitting place. The narrative had reached a turning-point. All the preliminaries were over—the action of the Exodus itself was about to begin. A dramatist would have made Act I. end and Act II. commence. A poet would have begun a new canto. In the imperfect bibliography of the time, it was thought best to make a division by a parenthetic insertion.

Ver. 13 seems to belong to what follows rather than to what precedes. There is no emphasis on the words and to Aaron, as if God, having found Moses singly to be irresponsible, had now given a charge to both the brothers conjointly (Rashi). Rather the verse is a concise summary of chs. iii.—v., prefixed to the genealogy when it was a separate document, and preserved when the compiler placed the document in the text.

Ver. 14.—These be the heads of their fathers' houses. By "fathers' houses" are meant "families" (see 1 Chr. iv. 38; v. 13; vii. 40; ix. 9, etc.); and "the heads of fathers' houses" are simply the acknowledged chiefs and founders of families. The main families of the tribe of Reuben were those of Hanoth, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi, actual sons of the patriarch (See Gen. xlv. 9; and compare 1 Chr. v. 3.)

Ver. 15.—The sons of Simeon. The list corresponds exactly, both in the names and in the order, with that given in Gen. xlv. 10, but differs considerably from 1 Chr. iv. 24, and Num. xxvi. 12. In both the latter places Jemuel appears as Nemuel, and Zohar as Zerach, while Obad is omitted. In 1 Chr. iv. 24, Jachin appears as Jarib. It would seem that the family of Obad died out and disappeared soon after the Israelites quitted Egypt. The family

of Shaul, on the other hand, increased and multiplied (1 Chr. iv. 25—27).

Ver. 16.—The sons of Levi. The same three sons are given in Gen. xlv. 11; Num. iii. 17; and 1 Chr. vi. 2. According to their generations. This phrase is introduced because the writer does not here stop at the sons, but proceeds on to the grandsons, great-grandsons, and other descendants. (See vers. 17—25.) He is concerned especially in this place with the descent of Moses, and therefore with the genealogy of the tribe of Levi, and has only inserted any account of the families descended from Reuben and Simeon, that he might not seem to disregard the claims of primogeniture. The years of the life of Levi. These began about forty or fifty years before the descent into Egypt, which took place after the birth of all his three sons, as appears from Gen. xlv. 8—11. The length of Levi's life is recorded, not from any chronological considerations, but to show God's blessing upon the family of Moses, which gave such length of days to so many of his ancestors.

Ver. 17.—The sons of Gershon. The line of Gershon, as the eldest, is taken first. Moses and Aaron are descended from the second son. Shimi is called "Shimei" in 1 Chr. vi. 17; but there is no difference in the original.

Ver. 18.—The sons of Kohath. The same names are given in 1 Chr. vi. 2 and 18. The years of the life of Kohath. Kohath, who was probably about twenty at the time of the descent into Egypt, must have considerably outlived Joseph, who died about seventy years after the descent. His eldest son, Amram, is not likely to have been born much later than his father's thirtieth year. (See Gen. xi. 12—24.) Amram would thus have been contemporary with Joseph for above fifty years.

Ver. 19.—The sons of Merari. The same names occur in 1 Chr. vi. 19 and xxiii. 21, Mahali, by a difference of pointing, becoming Mahli. The Mahlites and Mushites were among the most important of the Levitical families (Num. iii. 33; xxvi. 58).

Ver. 20.—Amram. That this Amram is the "man of the house of Levi" mentioned in ch. ii. 1, cannot be doubted; but it is scarcely possible that he should be the Amram of ver. 18, the actual son of Kohath and contemporary of Joseph. He is probably a descendant of the sixth or seventh generation, who bore the same name, and was the head of the Amramite house. That house, at the time of the Exodus, numbered above two thousand males (Num. iii. 27, 28). See the excellent

remarks of Keil and Delitzsch, 'Biblical Commentary,' vol. i. p. 470. E. T.; and compare Kurtz, 'History of Old Covenant,' vol. ii. p. 144, and Cook, in 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 274. Jochebed his father's sister. Marriages with aunts and nieces have been common in many countries, and are not forbidden by any natural instinct. They first became unlawful by the positive command recorded in Lev. xviii. 12. The name Jochebed is the earliest known compounded with Jah, or Jehovah. It means "the glory of Jehovah." She bore him Aaron and Moses. Aaron is placed first, as being older than Moses (ch. vii. 7). Miriam is omitted, since the object of the writer is confined to tracing descent in the male line.

Ver. 21.—The sons of Izhar. Korah is mentioned as a "son (descendant) of Izhar" in Num. xvi. 1 and 1 Chr. vi. 38. The other "sons" are not elsewhere mentioned. Zithri in this verse should be Zichri.

Ver. 22.—The sons of Uzziel. Mishael and Elzaphan are again mentioned as "sons of Uzziel" in Lev. x. 4. They were employed by Moses to carry the bodies of Nadab and Abihu out of the camp. Elzaphan, called Elizaphan, is mentioned as head of the Kohathites in Num. iii. 30.

Ver. 23.—Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab. Amminadab had not been previously mentioned. He was a descendant of Judah, through Pharez and Hezron, and held a place in the line of our Lord's ancestry. (See 1 Chr. ii. 3—10; Matt. i. 5.) Naashon was at this

time "prince of the tribe of Judah" (Num. ii. 3). Nadab and Abihu. On their fate, see Lev. x. 1, 2. Eleazar became high-priest upon the death of Aaron (Num. xx. 23—28). His death is related in Josh. xxiv. 33.

Ver. 24.—The sons of Korah. All Korah's sons were not cut off with him (Num. xxvi. 11). Three at least survived, and became the heads of "families of the Korhites."

Ver. 25.—Eleazar...took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife. Putiel is not elsewhere mentioned. The name is thought to be half Egyptian (compare Poti-phar) and to mean "dedicated to God." She bore him Phinehas. This Phinehas became high priest on the death of Eleazar (Judg. xx. 28). The heads of the fathers, i.e. "the patriarchal chiefs."

Vers. 26, 27.—The genealogy being concluded as a separate document, its author appends a notice that the Aaron and Moses mentioned in it (ver. 20) are the very Aaron and Moses who received the Divine command to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and who appeared before Pharaoh, and "spoke to him" on their behalf. As the heading of the document was kept upon its insertion into the narrative of the Exodus (see the comment on ver. 13), so its concluding sentences were kept, though (according to modern ideas) superfluous.

Ver. 26.—According to their armies. The term "armies" had not been previously used of the Israelitish people; but it occurs in ch. vii. 4, which was probably in the mind of the writer who drew up the genealogy.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 13—27.—*The historical character of real revelation.* Among the religions of the world which are based on the contents of a written volume, none has such an historical character as the religion of Christians. Most nations have evolved their religion out of their internal consciousness, and have then, after a certain lapse of time, thrown into a narrative form the supposed revelations made to this or that individual secretly, and by him committed to writing. These revelations—to give them the name—are not connected with any series of events, are not, properly speaking, historical at all, but belong to the domain of thought, contemplation, philosophy. It is quite otherwise with the religion of the Bible. Both in the Old Testament and in the New our attention is directed primarily and mainly to a series of facts. Religion is not put before us in an abstract, but in a concrete form. The Bible represents to us "God in history." We learn the nature and the will of God from his dealings with nations and individuals at definite times and in definite places. It is a necessary consequence of such a mode of inculcating religious truth, that very dry and mundane details must from time to time be obtruded upon the reader, in order that the narrative may be clear, and that he may understand the circumstances of time and place with which each writer in his turn has to deal. In this way genealogies come in. History cannot be understood without them. We want to know who the individuals are who are introduced afresh at each new stage in the narrative, and in what relation they stand to those other individuals with whom the narrative is concerned before and after. Genealogies convey this knowledge. Many think them uninteresting; but they are not so to any thoughtful person. For (1) they raise the salutary thought of the rapid flight of time and the speedily passing away of one generation after another. Οὕτως περὶ ἀνθρώπων

γενή, τοῖςδε καὶ ἀνδράσιν. (2) They show us how good men and bad, great men and little, are intermixed in the world, arise under the same conditions, seem produced by the same circumstances: and thus they force us to see what a vast power the human will has in shaping human character, and even in determining the course of earthly events. Hence they remind us of our responsibilities. (3) They hold up to us warnings and examples—warnings in the names to which there is attached the savour of evil deeds never to be forgotten so long as the world endures—Nadabs, Abihus, Korahs; examples in those, familiar to us as household words, which we no sooner hear or see than there rush to our thought a crowd of glorious and heroic actions. Being dead, these men still speak to us—theirs is a death “full of immortality.”

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 28 — 30 — The remainder of this chapter is scarcely more than a recapitulation. The author, or compiler, having interposed his genealogical section, has to take up the narrative from verse 12, where he broke off, and does so by almost repeating the words of verses 10—12. The only important addition is the insertion of the words —“I am the Lord” (ver. 29), and the only important variation, the substitution of “Speak thou unto Pharaoh *all that I say unto thee*” (ibid.), for “Speak unto Pharaoh . . . that he

let the children of Israel go out of his land” (ver. 11).

Ver. 29.—I am the Lord. It is not improbable that every revelation made to Moses was authenticated by these initial words—which have the force of that initial phrase, so constant in the later prophets—“Thus saith the Lord.”

Ver. 30.—All that I say unto thee. To the general command thus expressed, was probably appended the particular injunction of verse 11, not here repeated—“Speak thou unto Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.” The sacred historians continually abbreviate

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 14—28.—*The genealogy of Moses and Aaron.* Beside its direct interest as setting in an exact light the descent and relationship of the two principal figures in the succeeding history—Moses, the Lawgiver of Israel, and Aaron, the head of the priesthood—this genealogical register presents us with several points deserving of attention. We are taught by it—

1. To RECOGNISE THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SELECTION OF ITS INSTRUMENTS.

1. *The men selected*—Moses and Aaron (vers. 26, 27). Selection, as implying the previous or foreseen existence of variously qualified objects from which the selection is made is scarcely the fitting term to express the fact we have in view, viz. the preparing and raising up at this particular time and place, and from this particular stock, of a man of the special mould of Moses, with an eye to the accomplishment by him of a certain work. The appearance of great men at particular junctures of history is assuredly not to be attributed to chance. It is a shallow view of the Divine election which regards it as simply availing itself of happy varieties of character spontaneously presenting themselves in the course of natural development; as a workman might choose from a set of ready-made tools those best suited for his purpose. Election, if one may so speak, presides at the making of its object (Isaac, Jacob, David, etc.) as well as uses it when made (see Lange’s ‘Dogmatics’). The question is not simply how, a man of Moses’ gifts and qualifications being given, God should use him in the way he did, but rather, how a man of this spiritual build came at that precise juncture to be there at all—broke out at that point in the genealogical tree and not at another. This is the true problem, and the solution can only be found in the Divine arrangements.

2. *The sovereignty of the selection.* We cannot but be struck by the almost studious departure in this list from the lines of descent which would imply natural pre-eminence. (1) Moses is not descended from Reuben and Simeon, the eldest sons of Jacob (vers. 14, 15). The only purpose, apparently, served by the introduction of these two names in the genealogy is to show that Moses did *not* spring from them. (2) Neither did he

spring from Judah or Joseph—the sons of Jacob who fell heirs to the birthright forfeited by the sin of Reuben (1 Chron. v. 1, 2). The genealogy stops, as having attained its end, before it gets their length. (3) He sprang from Levi—a tribe originally united with Simeon under a curse (Gen. xlix. 7)—yet not from the oldest branch of it, but from Kohath, the second son (vers. 16—19). (4) Moses himself was not the eldest son of Amram, but stood by descent in a secondary relation to Aaron, who was afterwards to occupy so secondary a position in relation to *him*. What are we taught by these facts, if not the lesson so strongly emphasised in Rom. ix., that mere natural advantages constitute no ground of pre-eminence in the kingdom of God; that the spiritual everywhere rules and controls the natural. Examples may be drawn from every part of Scripture history. Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; Ephraim, not Manasseh; David, not his elder brothers; etc. The Jehovah attributes of freedom and sovereignty, to which this chapter introduces us, find not their least conspicuous illustration in this section of it.

II. TO TRACE, NOTWITHSTANDING, IN THE EXERCISE OF THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY, VARIOUS SPIRITUAL LAWS. The sovereignty of God is degraded whenever it is viewed as mere arbitrariness or caprice, as a liberty of indifference, or as anything else than the perfectly free and self-determined action of an all-wise, all-holy, all-good Will, working at every moment for the accomplishment of wise and good ends. Studied in this light, it will be recognised that it has not only (1) its inherent laws of operation, but (2) its self-imposed limitations. Partial glimpses of some of these laws are here afforded us.

1. *The natural, while subordinate to the spiritual, is taken as the basis of it.* There is to be recognised a congruity between the instrument and the use to which it is to be put; between the man, in respect of his physical, mental, and moral endowments, and the work for which he is designed. Election works in the natural sphere prior to its being revealed in the spiritual. Moses, for example, was, on his natural side, the product of a long line of causes operating through successive generations for the production of just such a man as he was. He was a descendant of Levi, as truly as any other. Inherited organisation was a fact of quite as capital importance in his case as in the case of any of his contemporaries. It had as much to do with the kind and quality of his manhood. Compare also Paul, separated from his mother's womb (Gal. i. 15), and essentially the same man after his conversion as before it. The mould in which he was cast by nature was that which specially fitted him for the work he had to do as an apostle.

2. *The purpose of God is wrought out not fatalistically, but in harmony with the laws of human freedom, and through man's moral self-determinations.* This principle also receives striking illustration in the names of this list. The derivation of Moses from Levi, and not from Reuben or Simeon, has a connection with facts in the moral history of the respective tribes. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the progenitors, were all three originally of so wicked a disposition as virtually to undergo their father's curse. Reuben lost the birthright, and Simeon and Levi were denied an inheritance with their brethren (Gen. xlix. 3—8). The descendants of the two former followed closely in the footsteps of their ancestors, and consequently never recovered themselves. It was different with the tribe of Levi, which by earnest piety and zeal seems to have risen to the rank of moral leadership even in Egypt, and was honoured to give birth to Moses and Aaron. And greater honour still was in reserve for it; for while in its letter—"I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel"—the curse was not repealed, an entirely new turn was given to it by the election of the tribe to the priesthood and service of the sanctuary. The curse was changed into a blessing. Had Reuben and Simeon followed in Levi's footsteps, who can doubt but that mercy would have been shown to them also?

3. *Election flows by preference in the lines of pious descent.* Moses and Aaron were the children of pious parents. The names of Moses' father—Amram, "the kindred of the lofty one"—and of his mother—she "whose glory is Jehovah" (ver. 20), testify to the piety of his ancestry. The instruction he received from them in early life, and during the visits he paid to their home, would not be without an important influence upon his character, and he had the benefit of their unceasing prayers. Aaron had even greater home advantages, in being with his parents till character was fully formed. This also is an important fact in its bearing on God's election of them to special service. The faith and prayers of parents have an important influence on the salvation of their children. By far the larger number of pious men and

women in the world have come from pious homes. (See numerous illustrations of this in Dr. Norman MacLeod's 'Home School.') The Church historian, Neander, has noticed in how many cases "pious mothers" had to do with the planting of the seeds of Christianity in the souls of those who afterwards produced great effects as teachers of the Church. He instances Nonna, the mother of Gregory of Nazianzum; Arethusa of Antioch, the mother of Chrysostom; the mother of Theodoret; and Monica, the mother of Augustine. (See the whole passage in 'Church History,' vol. iii. sect. 2, 1.)

III. THAT HONOUR IN GOD'S SIGHT IS DETERMINED BY SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. As regards *position*. The true centre point of honour in this genealogy is ver. 20—that which includes the names of Moses and Aaron. It was the *spiritual* greatness of these men which secured for them this honour. 2. As regards *rise and fall*, Reuben was "the firstborn of Israel" (ver. 14), but he lost through sin the prerogatives of birth. He is eclipsed by Levi, who, through piety, rose from a degraded position to one of honour. Korah, whose name, from considerations of relationship, is honourably prominent in this select list (vers. 21—24), subsequently destroyed himself by his rebellion (Num. xvi.). His posterity, however (another illustration of the same law), rose to high spiritual honour in the minstrelsy of the temple. 3. As regards *relationship*. The families of the tribe of Levi, grouped around the names of Moses and Aaron, some in nearer, some in more distant relations, draw honour from the association. The chief prominence is given to the Kohathites, as most nearly related to the sons of Amram. This distinction was subsequently confirmed by the appointment of this family to the charge of the sacred Ark, and of the vessels of the sanctuary (Num. iv. 4—16). Relationship with the good thus confers honour, and secures privilege. The highest of all examples of this is the honour and privilege conferred through relationship to Christ.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1—9.—Once more God made allowance for the weakness and self-distrust of Moses, severely tried as he had been by his former failure to persuade Pharaoh (ch. v. 1—5) and his recent rejection by the people of Israel (ch. vi. 9). He made allowance, and raised his courage and his spirits by fresh promises, and by a call upon him for immediate action. The process of deliverance, God assured him, was just about to begin. Miracles would be wrought until Pharaoh's stubbornness was overcome. He was himself to begin the series at once by casting his rod upon the ground, that it might become a serpent (ver. 9). From this point Moses' diffidence wholly disappears. Once launched upon his Heaven-directed course, assured of his miraculous powers, committed to a struggle with the powerful Egyptian king, he persevered without blenching or wavering until success crowned his efforts.

Ver. 1.—I have made thee a god to Pharaoh. Moses was diffident of appearing a second time before Pharaoh, who was so much his worldly superior. God reminds him that he is in truth very much Pharaoh's superior. If Pharaoh has earthly, he has unearthly power. He is to Pharaoh "as a god," with a

right to command his obedience, and with strength to enforce his commands. Aaron shall be thy prophet, i.e. "thy spokesman"—the interpreter of thy will to others. Compare ch. iv. 16.

Ver. 2.—Thou shalt speak. The Septuagint and the Vulgate have, "Thou shalt speak to him," which undoubtedly gives the true sense. Moses was to speak to Aaron, Aaron to Pharaoh. (See ch. iv. 15, 16.)

Ver. 3.—I will harden Pharaoh's heart. See the comment on ch. iv. 21. And multiply my signs and my wonders. The idea of a long series of miracles is here, for the first time, distinctly introduced. Three signs had been given (ch. iv. 3—9); one further miracle had been mentioned (ib. 23). Now a *multiplication* of signs and wonders is promised. Compare ch. iii. 20, and ch. vi. 6, which, however, are not so explicit as the present passage.

Ver. 4.—That I may lay my hand on Egypt. Pharaoh's obstinacy was foreseen and foreknown. He was allowed to set his will against God's, in order that there might be a great display of Almighty power, such as would attract the attention both of the Egyptians generally and of all the surrounding nations. God's glory would be thereby promoted, and there would be a general dread of interfering with his people. (See ch. xv. 14—16; Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25, etc.) Bring forth my armies. See the comment on ch. vi. 26. Great judgments. See above, ch. vi. 6.

Ver. 5.—The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. Rather, "that I am Jehovah"—i.e. that I answer to my Name—that I am the only God who is truly existent, other so-called gods being nonentities. They will know this and feel this when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, as I am about to stretch it forth.

Ver. 6.—Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them. This statement is general, and anticipative of the entire series of interviews beginning here (verse 10), and terminating (ch. x. 29) with the words, "I will see thy face no more." The obedience of Moses and Aaron was perfect and continuous from this time forward until Egypt was quitted.

Ver. 7.—Fourscore years old. This age is confirmed by the statement (in Deut. xxxi. 2; xxxiv. 7) that Moses was a hundred and twenty at his death. It is also accepted as exact by St. Stephen (Acts vii. 23, 30).

Moderns are surprised that at such an age a man could undertake and carry through a difficult and dangerous enterprise; but in Egypt one hundred and ten years was not considered a very exceptionally long life, and men frequently retained their full vigour till seventy or eighty.

Ver. 9.—When Pharaoh shall speak to you, saying, Shew a miracle. It is obvious that there would have been an impropriety in Moses and Aaron offering a sign to Pharaoh until he asked for one. They claimed to be ambassadors of Jehovah, and to speak in his name (ch. v. 1). Unless they were misdoubted, it was not for them to produce their credentials. Hence they worked no miracle at their former interview. Now, however, the time was come when their credentials would be demanded, and an express command was given them to exhibit the first "sign."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God assigns to each man his intellectual grade.* Three different intellectual grades are here set before us—that of the thinker, that of the expounder, and that of the mere recipient. Pharaoh, notwithstanding his exalted earthly rank, occupies the lowest position. He is to hang on the words of Aaron, who is to be to him as a prophet of the Most High. Aaron himself is to hang on the words of Moses, and to be simply his mouthpiece. Moses is to stand to both (compare ch. iv. 16) as God. And here note, that the positions are not self-assumed—God assigns them. So there are leaders of thought in all ages, to whom God has given their intellectual gifts, whom he has marked out for intellectual pre-eminency, and whom he makes to stand to the rest of men as gods. Sometimes they are their own prophets—they combine, that is, the power of utterance with the power of thought. But very often they need an interpreter. Their lips are uncircumcised. They lack eloquence; or they even lack the power of putting their thoughts into words, and require a "prophet," to publish their views to the world. The "prophet-interpreter" occupies a position very much below theirs, but still one requiring important and peculiar gifts, such as God alone can give. He must have the intelligence to catch the true bearing, connection, and force of the ideas presented to him, often in rude and uncouth language, like statues rough-hewn. He must be able to work up the rough material into presentable form. He must have a gift of language, if not a gift of speech. The great mass of men occupy a lower rank than either of these; they can neither originate, nor skilfully interpret; it remains that they be content to receive. God has given to them their humble position, as he has given to the others their loftier ones. They should cultivate their receptivity. They should be satisfied to listen and learn. They should remember that if, on the one hand, οὐτος μὲν πανάριστος, ὃς αὐτὸς πάντα νοήσῃ—on the other, ἐσθλὸς δ' αὐτὸς κακείνος ὃς εὐ εἰπόντι πείθεται.

Vers. 3—5.—*The fierceness of man turns to God's praise.* The most signal triumphs of Divine power are those in which the resistance to it is the most determined. The greatest of all victories was probably that which was gained when—after "war in heaven"—Satan was seen, like lightning, falling from heaven to earth. Since then, great triumphs, tending to God's praise, occur whenever the right and the truth succeed against seemingly insuperable opposition. When the boy shepherd with his sling and stone smites to the earth the gigantic Philistine—when the proud Sennacherib after all his boasts has to leave Jerusalem unhurt and fly to Nineveh—when Epiphanes is defied and baffled by a handful of Jewish mountaineers—when victory is finally gained by "Athanasius contra mundum," God's might is seen and recognised, as it would not have

been, unless overwhelming strength had seemed to be arrayed against comparative weakness. When the "heathen rage," and the "kings of the earth and rulers" are on their side, and the cry of defiance goes forth: "Let us break God's hands asunder, and cast away his cords from us"—then God is most apt to show his might—to "refrain the spirit of princes," and make it manifest that he "is wonderful among the kings of the earth." The longer and fiercer the opposition, the more conspicuously is God's praise shown forth. Blow follows blow until the opposing power is shattered, smitten to the ground, laid prostrate. Then is the time for the song of triumph: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the right way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" (Ps. ii. 10-12).

Ver. 9.—Miracles the credentials of an ambassador from God. It is not easy to see any way in which God could authenticate a message as coming from him, except by giving the messenger supernatural powers. Conceivably, he might proclaim his will from heaven directly, in terms of human speech. But even then doubts would be raised as to the words uttered; men's recollections of them would differ; some would question whether words were used at all, and would hold that it had "thundered" (John xii. 29). If, to avoid such results, he speaks to man through man, how is he to make it clear that his prophet has indeed been sent by him? He cannot make his messenger impeccable, if he is still to be man. He cannot give him irresistible eloquence, for eloquence is at once suspected; the reason rises up against it and resists it. What other course is there, but to impart to his messenger a portion of his own command over nature—in other words, to give him the power of working miracles? The light of nature seems to have taught Pharaoh to ask for this proof. The same light taught Nicodemus to accept it—"No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (ib. iii. 2). So it will ever be with simple men in simple times. It is only when men have become sophisticated, when they have darkened the light that is in them by "foolish questionings" and "oppositions of science falsely so called," that they begin to see specious objections to miracles, and regard them as "difficulties in the way of receiving a revelation" rather than as convincing evidences of it. We may properly call upon an opponent to tell us what evidence of a Divine mission he would accept, if he rejects miracles as an evidence, and wait for his answer. We shall probably find that *ὁ ἀναστρέφων ταύτην τὴν πίστιν οὐ πανὶ πιστότερον ἐπεὶ* ("he who destroys this basis of belief will not discover a surer one").—Aristotle.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-8.—A god to Pharaoh. Moses was in the trying position of being sent out anew upon a mission in which hitherto he had not had the slightest particle of success. His discouragement was *natural*. Pharaoh, on a previous occasion, had repulsed him. He had lost the ear even of his own people. The situation, since his former interview with the monarch, had altered for the worse. To proceed further was like rowing against wind and tide, with little prospect of ever reaching shore. Discouragement wrought in the usual way. It led him to magnify difficulties. He brought up again his old objection of his deficiencies of speech. Even with Aaron as an intermediary, he felt how awkward it would be to appear in the presence of Pharaoh, and not be able to deliver his own message. His inability of speech would certainly, he thought, expose him to contempt. Yet observe, God *forebore* with him. His reluctance was not without sin, but God, who knows our frame, does not expect to find in us all at once the perfection of angels, and is compassionate of our weakness. We have here, therefore—

I. A DISHEARTENED SERVANT SUITABLY ENCOURAGED. God told Moses—1. *That he would clothe him with an authority which even Pharaoh would be compelled to respect.* "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" (ver. 1). It was not with words only that Moses was sent to Pharaoh. Powers would be given him to enforce his words with deeds. The judgments he would bring upon the land would clothe him with a supernatural terror—make him a superhuman and almost a divine person—in the eyes of

Pharaoh and his servants. (Cf. ch. xii. 3.) So God gives attestation to his servants still, making it evident by the power of the Holy Ghost upon them, that they come in his name, and speak with his authority. He accompanies their word with Divine power, giving it efficacy to arrest, convict, and convert, and compelling the haughtiest of the earth to acknowledge the source of their message. So Felix trembled before Paul (Acts xxiv. 25). Paul's Gospel came to the Thessalonians, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 5). 2. *That the work of deliverance would be no longer delayed.* This also was implied in what God said to Moses: the time had come for speech to be exchanged for action. Everything indicated that the "charge" with which Moses was now entrusted was to be the final one. It should encourage desponding servants to reflect that God has his "set time" for the fulfilment of every promise; and that, when this period arrives, all their mourning will be turned into joy.

II. THE COURSE OF ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE FORETOLD. 1. *Foretold because foreseen.* It is God's prerogative that he knows the end from the beginning (Is. xlii. 9). Nothing can take him by surprise. He knows all the way his purposes are to travel. The whole future lies mapped out, as in a clear-drawn chart, before him. 2. *Foreseen because pre-ordained.* God, like Christ in the miracle of the loaves, knew in himself what he would do (John vi. 6). Nothing was left to chance in his arrangements. The steps in his plan were fixed beforehand. What would be done would be according to God's "determinate counsel and foreknowledge" (Acts ii. 23)—would be "whatsoever (his) hand and (his) counsel determined before to be done" (Acts iv. 28). The deliverance was arranged in such a way as most to glorify the power and greatness of the Deliverer, and demonstrate his superiority to heathen idols. This in no wise implies that violence was in the very least done to human freedom, though it suggests that God can so interweave the volitions of men, in the situations in which he places them, into his purposes, as to leave not one of them outside his settled plan. The chief difficulty is in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, here (ver. 3) represented as an ordained link in the chain of God's designs. But if this hardening simply means that God will place Pharaoh, already a bad man, in circumstances which he knows infallibly *will* harden his heart, and if this is done justly, and in punishment of former sins, the hardening taking effect through unalterable laws of the moral nature, which also are of God's ordainment, it is difficult to see what righteous objection can be taken to it. 3. *Foretold for wise ends.* Similar predictions of the course of the deliverance had been made at earlier stages (cf. ch. iii. 19—22; iv. 21—24; vi. 1—9). They are here repeated—(1) For the instruction of Moses, that he might be prepared for all that was to happen—that he might understand and co-operate with God in the execution of his designs. (2) For the re-invigoration of Moses' faith. (3) That it might be evidenced by the working-out of this fore-announced plan, that the God of Israel was indeed Jehovah, a free, personal Being, working in history for the accomplishment of gracious purposes. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14). God takes Moses into his counsel, and discovers to him something of his plan of operation. So he does in the Scriptures with his Church (Rev. i. 1).

II. A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S END IN PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT (vers. 3, 4). The end is twofold—1. The manifestation of the utterly free and unconstrained character of his grace and mercy in the salvation of man; and 2. What is the necessary counterpart of this, the manifestation of his power and justice in the infliction of judgments upon his enemies. Even evil is thus made to contribute indirectly to the ultimate and eternal establishment of the righteousness of God.—J. O.

Ver. 3.—*Heart-hardening.* On this subject, see above, and on ch. iv. 21. The present seems an appropriate place for a somewhat fuller treatment.

I. HARDENING AS PROCEEDING FROM GOD. "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." This, assuredly, is more than simple permission. God hardens the heart—1. *Through the operation of the laws of our moral constitution.* These laws, of which God is the author, and through which he operates in the soul, ordain hardening as the penalty of evil conduct, of resistance to truth, and of all misimprovement and abuse of privilege. 2. *Through his providence*—as when God, in the execution of his judgments, places a wicked man in situations which he knows can only have a hardening effect upon him.

He does this in righteousness. "God, having permitted evil to exist, must thereafter of necessity permit it also to run its whole course in the way of showing itself to be what it really is, as that which aims at the defeat of the Divine purpose, and the consequent dissolution of the universe." This involves hardening. 3. *Through a direct judgment in the soul of the individual*, God smiting him with a spirit of blindness and infatuation in punishment of obstinate resistance to the truth. This is the most difficult of all aspects of hardening, but it only cuts the knot, does not untie it, to put superficial meanings upon the scriptures which allege the reality of the judgment (e.g. Deut. xxviii. 28; 2 Thess. ii. 11). It is to be viewed as connected with what may be called the *internal* providence of God in the workings of the human mind; his government of the mind in the wide and obscure regions of its involuntary activities. The direction taken by these activities, seeing that they do not spring from man's own will, must be as truly under the regulation of Providence, and be determined in quite as special a manner, as are the *outward* circumstances of our lot, or those so-called *fortuities* concerning which we are assured: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matt. x. 29). It is a significant fact that, as sin advances, the sinner becomes less and less a free agent, falls increasingly under the dominion of necessity. The involuntary activities of the soul gain ground upon the voluntary. The hardening may be conceived of, partly as the result of a withdrawal of light and restraining grace; partly as a giving of the soul up to the delusions of the adversary, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2), whose will gradually occupies the region in the moral life vacated by the human will, and asserts there a correspondingly greater power of control; and partly as the result of a direct Divine ordering of the course of thought, feeling, and imagination. Hengstenberg acutely remarks: "It appears to proceed from design, that the hardening at the beginning of the plagues is attributed, in a preponderating degree, to Pharaoh, and towards the end to God. The higher the plagues rise, so much the more does Pharaoh's hardening assume a supernatural character, so much the more obvious is it to refer it to its supernatural causality."

II. **HARDENING IN ITSELF CONSIDERED.** The heart is the centre of personality, the source of moral life, the seat of the will, the conscience, and the affections (Prov. iv. 23; Matt. xv. 18). The hardening of the heart may be viewed under two aspects: 1. More generally as the result of growth in sin, with consequent loss of moral and religious susceptibility; and 2. As hardening against God, the author of its moral life. We have but to put these two things together—the heart, the *seat* of moral life, hardening itself against the *Author* of its moral life—to see that such hardening is of necessity fatal, an act of moral suicide. It may elucidate the subject to remark that in every process of hardening there is something which the heart *parts with*, something which it *resists*, and something which it *becomes*. There is, in other words—(1) That which the heart hardens itself *in*, viz. some evil quality, say injustice, cruelty, lust, hate, secret enmity to God, which quality gradually becomes a fixed element in character; (2) that which the heart hardens itself *against*, viz. the influences of truth, love, and righteousness, in whatever ways these are brought to bear upon it, whether in the promptings of conscience, the movements of natural sensibility, the remonstrances of parents and friends, the Word of God, the internal strivings of the Spirit; and (3) that which the heart *parts with* in hardening, viz. with its original susceptibility to truth, with its sensitiveness to moral influences, with its religious feeling, with its natural generosity, etc. The result is blindness, callousness, lostness to the feeling of right, to the sense of shame, to the authority of God, to the voice of truth, even to true self-interest. All hardening is thus *double-sided*; hardening in hate, e.g., being at the same time hardening against love, with a loss of the capacity of love; hardening in injustice being a hardening against justice, with a loss of the capacity for moral discernment; hardening in cruelty being a hardening against kindness, with a corresponding destruction of the benevolent sensibilities; hardening against God being at the same time hardening in self-hood, in egoism, with a loss of the capacity of faith. We hence conclude: 1. *All evil hardens, and all hardening in moral evil is in principle hardening against God.* The hardening may begin at the circumference of the moral nature, and involve the centre, or it may begin at the centre, and work out to the circumference. Men may be enemies to God in their mind by

wicked works (Col. i. 21), they may have "the understanding darkened," and be "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness (*marg. hardness*) of their hearts," and being "past feeling" may give "themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. iv. 17—19), and yet be strangers to God's revealed truth. All sin, all resistance to light, all disobedience to conscience, has this hardening effect (cf. Rom. i. 19—32). But it is a will which has broken from God which is thus in various ways hardening itself, and enmity to God is latent in the process. The moment the truth of God is brought to bear on such a nature, this latent enmity is made manifest, and, as in the case of Pharaoh, further hardening is the result. Conversely, 2. *Hardening against God is hardening in moral evil.* The hardening may begin at the centre, in resistance to God's known will, and to the strivings of his Spirit, and thence spread through the whole moral nature. This is the deepest and fundamental hardening, and of itself gives a character to the being. A heart hardened in its interior against its Maker would be entitled to be called hard, no matter what superficial qualities of a pleasant kind remained to it, and no matter how correct the moral conduct. 3. *Hardening results in a very special degree from resistance to the Word of God, to Divine revelation.* This is the type of hardening which is chiefly spoken of in Scripture, and which gives rise to what it specially calls "the hard and impenitent heart" (Rom. ii. 5). All revelation of God, especially his revelation in Christ, has a *testing* power, and if resisted produces a hardness which speedily becomes obduracy. God may be resisted in his Word, his Spirit, his servants, his chastisements, and in the testimony to his existence and authority written on the soul itself. But the highest form of resistance—the worst and deadliest—is resistance to the Spirit drawing to Christ.

III. THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH COMPARED WITH HARDENING UNDER THE GOSPEL. Pharaoh stands out in Scripture as the typical instance of hardening of the heart. 1. He and Jehovah stood in direct opposition to each other. 2. God's will was made known to him in a way he could not mistake. He pretended at first to doubt, but doubt soon became impossible. 3. He resisted to the last. And the longer he resisted, his heart grew harder. 4. His resistance was his ruin. In considering the case of this monarch, however, and comparing it with our own, we have to remember—1. That Pharaoh was a *heathen king*. He was naturally prejudiced in favour of the gods of Egypt. He had at first no knowledge of Jehovah. But *we* have had from infancy the advantage of a knowledge of the true God, of his existence, his attributes, and his demands. 2. Pharaoh had a *heathen upbringing*. His moral training was vastly inferior to that which most have enjoyed who hear the Gospel. 3. The influences he resisted were *outward influences*—strokes of judgment. The hardening produced by resistance to the *inward* influences of Christianity, strivings of the Spirit, etc., is necessarily of a deeper kind. 4. What was demanded of Pharaoh was *the liberation of a nation of slaves*—in our case it is required that we part with *sins*, and yield up heart and will to the Creator and Redeemer. Outward compliance would have sufficed in his case; in ours, the compliance must be inward and spiritual. Here, again, inasmuch as the demand goes deeper, the hardening produced by resistance is of necessity deeper also. There is now possible to man the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 32; Heb. vi. 4—6). 5. The *motives* in the two cases are not comparable. In the one case, God revealed in judgments; in the other, in transcendent love and mercy.

Conclusion :—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. iii. 7, 8, 13, 15, iv. 7). Beware, in connection with this hardening, of "the deceitfulness of sin." The heart has many ways of *disguising* from itself the fact that it is resisting God, and hardening itself in opposition to him. One form is *procrastination*. Not yet—a more convenient season. A second is *compromise*. We shall find attempts at this with Pharaoh. By conceding *part* of what is asked—giving up some sin to which the heart is less attached—we hide from ourselves the fact that we are resisting the chief demand. Herod observed John the Baptist, and "when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly" (Mark vi. 20). The *forms of godliness*, as in the Pharisees, may conceal from the heart its denial of the power thereof. Conscience is quieted by church-membership, by a religious profession. There is *disguised resistance* in all *insincere repentance*. This is seen in Pharaoh's relentings. Even when the

resistance becomes more avowed, there are ways of partially disguising the fact that it is indeed *God* we are resisting. Possibly the heart tries to wriggle out of the duty of submission by *cavilling at the evidence* of revelation. Or, objection is perhaps taken to something in the *manner* or *form* in which the truth has been presented; some alleged defect of taste, or infelicity of illustration, or rashness of statement, or blunder in science, or possibly a slip in grammar. Any straw will serve which admits of being clutched at. So conviction is pushed off, decision is delayed, resistance is kept up, and all the while the heart is getting harder—less sensible of the truth, more ensnared in error. It is well also to remember that even *failure to profit by the word*, without active resistance to it (if such a thing is possible)—simple *want of care* in the cherishing of good impressions, and too rash an exposure to the influences which tend to dissipate and destroy them—will result in their disappearance, and in a consequent hardening of the heart. The impressions will not readily return with the same vividness. *To-day*, then, and *now*, hear and obey the voice of God.—J. O.

Chap. vi. ver. 28—chap. vii. ver. 7.—*God still glorified amid human weakness and sin.* I. MOSES' WEAKNESS (chap. vi. vers. 28—30). The command was—"Speak *thou* unto Pharaoh." Moses in his despondency is overpowered by the sense of his infirmity. He fears the ridicule of the Egyptian court. There are times when the sense of our unfitness for speaking God's words crushes us. Let us take heed lest lowly self-judgment pass into unbelief and disobedience. The loss of faith in ourselves is no reason why we should cease to trust God.

II. GOD'S REMEDY (chap. vii. vers. 1, 2). Moses' slowness of speech is veiled by *unthought-of glory*. He that feared the derision of Pharaoh is surrounded with dreadful majesty and made as God to him. To obedient faith, felt incompetency for the task God calls us to, will only be the occasion of his bestowing upon us more abundant honour. Our very defects can be transformed into power. A man's very awkwardness often disarms criticism and appeals to the heart as the most faultless elegance can never do.

III. JEHOVAH WILL BE GLORIFIED IN PHARAOH'S UNBELIEF (vers. 3—5). 1. They are forewarned of Pharaoh's stubborn refusal. We are not sent on God's errand with false expectations. 2. God's purpose will be accomplished, not defeated, by that opposition. His defiance will only call forth the revelation of God's terribleness. Where sin has sought to dwell and to reign, the terrors of God's judgment will alone be remembered. 3. Egypt will also know that God is Jehovah—the faithful One. God's name will be written in *their* punishment as well as in Israel's redemption.

IV. THE VERY AGE OF GOD'S SERVANTS WILL PRAISE HIM (ver. 7). The childhood of Samuel, the youth of Daniel, the old age of Moses and Aaron are arguments of unconquerable strength for the feeble and despised to trust and toil. 1. There is a place for all. 2. No man's day is over if he will only yield to God. The dying thief who believed in his dying agonies has been among the mightiest preachers of God's infinite grace.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 10—13.—THE FIRST SIGN, AND ITS FAILURE TO CONVINCE. Obeying the command given them (vers. 2, 9), Moses and Aaron went to the court a second time, and entering into the royal presence, probably repeated their demand—as from God—that the king would let the Children of Israel go (ch. vi. 11), when Pharaoh objected that they had no authority to speak to him in God's name, and required an evidence of their authority, either in the actual words of verse 9 ("Shew a miracle for you"), or in some equivalent ones Aaron hereupon cast down on the

ground the rod which Moses had brought from Midian, and it became a serpent (ver. 10). Possibly Pharaoh may have been prepared for this. He may have been told that this was one among the signs which had been done in the sight of the elders and people of Israel when the two brothers first came back from Midian (ch. iv. 30). If he knew of it, no doubt the "magicians" knew of it, and had prepared themselves. Pharaoh summoned them, as was natural, to his presence, and consulted them with respect to the portent, whereupon they too cast down the

rods which they were carrying in their hands, and they "became serpents"; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (ver. 12). (For the explanation of these facts, see the comment below). Pharaoh was to some extent impressed by the miracle, but not so as to yield. His heart remained hard, and he refused to let the people go.

Ver. 10.—Aaron cast down his rod. The rod is called indifferently "Aaron's rod" and "Moses' rod," because, though properly the rod of Moses (ch. iv. 2), yet ordinarily it was placed in the hands of Aaron (vers. 19, 20; ch. viii. 5, 17, etc.) It became a serpent. The word for "serpent" is not the same as was used before (ch. iv. 3); but it is not clear that a different species is meant. More probably it is regarded by the writer as a synonym.

Ver. 11.—Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers. That magic was an object of much attention and study in Egypt is abundantly evident from "The tale of Setna" ('Records of the Past,' vol. iv. pp. 133—148), "The Magic Papyrus" (*ibid.* vol. x. pp. 137—158), and many other writings. It consisted, to a large extent, in charms, which were thought to have power over men and beasts, especially over reptiles. What amount of skill and power the Egyptian magicians possessed may perhaps be doubted. Many commentators believe them to have been in actual communication with the unseen world, and to have worked their wonders by the assistance of evil spirits. Others, who reject this explanation, believe that they themselves were in possession of certain supernatural gifts. But the commonest view at the present day regards them as simply persons who had a knowledge of many secrets of nature which were generally unknown, and who used this

knowledge to impress men with a belief in their supernatural power. The words used to express "magicians" and "enchantments" support this view. The magicians are called *khākāmīm*, "wise men," "men educated in human and divine wisdom" (Keil and Delitzsch); *mēkashshēphīm*, "charmers," "mutterers of magic words" (Gesenius); and *khartummim*, which is thought to mean either "sacred scribes" or "bearers of sacred words" (Cook). The word translated "enchantments" is *lēhātīm*, which means "secret" or "hidden arts" (Gesenius). On the whole, we regard it as most probable that the Egyptian "magicians" of this time were jugglers of a high class, well skilled in serpent-charming and other kindred arts, but not possessed of any supernatural powers. The magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments. The magicians, aware of the wonder which would probably be wrought, had prepared themselves; they had brought serpents, charmed and stiffened so as to look like rods (a common trick in Egypt: 'Description de l'Egypte,' vol. i. p. 159) in their hands; and when Aaron's rod became a serpent, they threw their stiffened snakes upon the ground, and disenchanting them, so that they were seen to be what they were—snakes, and not really rods.

Ver. 12.—But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. Aaron's serpent turned upon its rivals and devoured them, thus exhibiting a marked superiority.

Ver. 13.—And he hardened Pharaoh's heart. Rather, "But Pharaoh's heart was hard." The verb employed is not active, but neuter; and "his heart" is not the accusative, but the nominative. Pharaoh's heart was too hard for the sign to make much impression on it. He did not see that Moses had done much more than his own magicians could do as the Lord had said. See ver. 4.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 10—12.—*False imitations of things Divine not difficult of detection.*—It is Satan's wont, in all ages and on all possible occasions, to set up counterfeits of things Divine, in order to confuse men's minds, and make them mistake the false for the true. Aaron no sooner works a true miracle, a real proof that he is a prophet of God (verse 1), than Satan's instruments, the magicians of Egypt, are ready with an imitation of the miracle, on which they base a claim that Pharaoh is not to listen to Aaron, but to them. "Curious arts" (Acts xix. 19) and "lying wonders" (2 Thess. ii. 9) were employed to discredit the genuine miracles of the Apostles. False Christs rose up in various places, soon after the lifetime of our Lord, claiming to be the Messiah spoken of by the prophets, who "showed great signs and wonders," capable of deceiving, if it had been possible, even "the very elect" (Matt. xxiv. 24). Apocryphal gospels were put out by the side of the true ones. A new and mystic philosophy was set up as the real "knowledge" which the Son of God had come to reveal, and new religions, like Gnosticism and Manichæism, disputed with real Christianity the right to be viewed as the actual religion of Jesus. Fanatics, at the time of the Reformation, parodied the Reformed

religion, and established "Churches of the True Saints," which while affecting extreme purity fell practically into fearful excesses. Even at the present day rivals are set up to the revelation of God given us in the Bible—and the religious books of the Egyptians, or the Hindoos, or the Persians, or the Buddhists, or the Mahometans, are declared to be just as good, just as much from God, just as deserving of our attention, as the Old and New Testaments. But, if men are honest and do not wish to be deceived, it is easy, with a little patience, to detect each spurious imitation. Aaron's rod *swallowed up* the rods of the magicians. It remained—they ceased to exist altogether. The "curious arts" and "lying wonders" of those who opposed the Apostles, if examined into, would have been found either mere tricks, or weak devices of Satan, with none of the power, the dignity, the awfulness, of a true miracle. And time brought them to nought—they built up nothing—effected nothing. So with the "false Christs," and the apocryphal gospels, and the religions of Gnosticism and Manichæism, and the fanatical sects of the Reformation period: they took no hold on the world—the truth "swallowed them up"—they vanished away. With the spurious "revelations," if the case is not the same, it is nearly the same—if they have not, all of them, vanished, they are all of them, vanishing. Brought into contact with the truth—placed side by side with it—they cannot maintain themselves—they are "swallowed up" after a while. The ancient pantheism of Egypt perished in the fourth century; the religion of Zoroaster is almost non-existent; that of the Vedas is now crumbling to decay in the schools of Calcutta and Benares. Mahometanism shows signs of breaking up. When Thibet and China are freely opened to Christian missions, the last day of Buddhism will not be far off. The Divine sweeps away the human—Aaron's rod swallows up its rivals.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—14.—The rod turned into a serpent. On this sign, notice—

I. ITS SIGNIFICANCE. 1. *Its distinctness from the similar sign wrought for the conviction of the Israelites.* On the meaning of the latter, see chap. iv. 1—6. There the serpent into which the rod was turned seemed to denote the power of the monarch—the royal and divine power of Egypt—of which the serpent was an Egyptian emblem. However threatening the aspect of this power to Moses and the Israelites, the sign taught them not to fear it, and promised victory over it. Here, on the contrary, the serpent is a *menace* to Pharaoh. It speaks to him in his own language, and tells him of a royal and Divine power opposed to his which he will do well not to provoke. The sign was harmless in itself, but menacing in its import. 2. *Its relation to Egyptian magic.* On this, see the exposition. The magicians produced an imitation of the miracle, but this very circumstance was turned into an occasion of greater humiliation to them. "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." The truth taught was the impotence of magic arts as opposed to the power of Jehovah. Royalty, divinity, magic, all are represented as overthrown in this significant marvel. Note—God seldom destroys a sinner without first warning him. The warnings are such that, if taken in time, worse consequences may be escaped. Conscience warns, the Spirit warns, providence warns. Red danger-signals stand at the opening of every path of crime, if the deluded transgressor would but take heed to them.

II. ITS EVIDENTIAL VALUE. It was ordered to be wrought in answer to Pharaoh's demand for a miracle (ver. 9). Presumably, Pharaoh made the request, then the wonder was performed. Note here—1. *The human mind naturally craves for miracle as an evidence of revelation.* The evidence of outward miracle is not the highest, but neither should it be disparaged. It is the kind of evidence which minds at an inferior stage of development are most capable of appreciating, while, in connection with other circumstances, it is a powerful confirmation to the faith even of those who might possibly dispense with it. Christ's repeated refusal of a sign was not based upon the principle that signs were unnecessary, but upon the fact that a superabundance of signs had already been given. A faith resting merely on miracles (John ii. 23, 24) may be destitute of moral worth, but miracles had their value in certifying the source of the message, as well as in arousing attention, and they were themselves vehicles of moral teaching. 2. *God satisfies this craving of the mind by granting the evidence required.* It does not lessen, but greatly

enhances, the value of this evidence that most of the miracles of Scripture are not merely *credentials* of the revelation, but constitutive parts of it. See this truth wrought out in the chapter on "The Function of Miracle in Revelation" in Dr. Alex. Bruce's book, 'The Chief End of Revelation.' This able writer, however, is unnecessarily vehement in his polemic against the view that miracles are also wrought in *proof* of revelation; especially as in the latter part of his discussion he really admits all that the advocates of the so-called "traditional" view would think worth contending for. "Take away miracle from a revelation of grace, and the revelation can hardly be known for what it is. . . . With the miracles retained as an essential part of the story, a gracious purpose towards a chosen people is indubitable; without them, it is very doubtful indeed. . . . Retain the miracles, and the gracious purpose is stringently proved, and the contrary opinion excluded as untenable. The miracles and the purpose thus stand or fall together. To certify, beyond all doubt, a gracious purpose, miracle is necessary" (pp. 175—177). In the case before us, the evidential function must be allowed to be the leading one. 3. *Pharaoh's request for the miracle.* It is a significant circumstance that whereas on the previous occasion (chap. v. 1—5) Pharaoh made no request for a sign, he asks for one at this second interview. The unexpected reappearance of these two men, renewing their former demand, and doing so with even more emphasis and decision than at first, must have produced a startling effect upon him. Truth, to a certain extent, carries its own credentials with it. There must have been that in the manner and speech of these grave and aged men (ver. 7) which repelled the hypothesis that they were impostors. Probably Pharaoh had never been quite sure that their mission was mere pretence. A secret fear of the God whose worshippers he knew he was maltreating may have mingled with his thoughts, and kept him in vague uneasiness. He may thus have been more disturbed by the former demand than he cared to allow, and now thought it prudent to satisfy himself further. Professed disbelief in the Bible is in the same way often accompanied by a lurking suspicion that there is more in its teaching than is admitted.

III. ITS EFFECT UPON THE MONARCH. 1. *He permitted himself to be imposed on by the counterfeit of the magicians.* Their imitation of the miracle furnished him with a plausible excuse for ascribing the work to magic. It gave him a pretext for unbelief. *He wished* one, and he got it. He ignored the strong points in the evidence, and fixed on the partial resemblance to the miracle in the feats of his tricksters. There were at least *three* circumstances which should have made him pause, and, if not convinced, ask for further proof. (1) The miracle of Moses and Aaron was *not* done by enchantments. (2) The men who did the wonder themselves asserted that it was wrought by Divine power. (3) The superiority of their power to that of the magicians was evinced by Aaron's rod swallowing up the rods of the others. And seeing that the miracle of God's messengers was *real*, while that of the magicians was (so far as we can judge) but a juggler's trick, there were probably numerous other circumstances of difference between them, on which, had Pharaoh been anxious to ascertain the truth, his mind would naturally have rested. But Pharaoh's mind was not honest. *He wished* to disbelieve, and he did it. 2. *He refused the request.* He *hardened* himself, i.e. the unwillingness of his heart to look at the truth, now that it had got something to stay itself upon, solidified into a fixed, hard determination to resist the demand made upon him. Note—(1) God tries men's dispositions by furnishing them with evidence which, while abundantly sufficient to convince minds that are honest, leaves numerous loopholes of escape to those indisposed to receive it. (2) It is the easiest thing in the world, if one wants to do it, to find pretexts for unbelief. We are far from asserting that *all* doubt is dishonest, but it is unquestionable that under the cloak of honest intellectual inquiry a great deal that is not honest is frequently concealed. To a mind *unwilling* to be convinced, there is nothing easier than to evade evidence. Specious counter-arguments are never far to seek. Any specious reply to Christian books, any naturalistic hypothesis, any flimsy parallel, will serve the purpose. The text directs attention to the *method of false parallels*—a favourite one with modern sceptics. Parallels are hunted up between Christianity and the ethnic religions. Superficial resemblances in ethics, doctrine and ritual, are laid hold upon and magnified. Christ is compared with Buddha and Confucius, or his miracles are put in comparison with the ecclesiastical miracles of the middle ages. And thus his religion is supposed to be reduced to the naturalistic level. The defeat of all such attempts is shadowed forth in the miracle before us.—J. O.

Vers. 8—13.—*The credentials of God's ambassadors to the froward.* 1. **THE DEMANDS OF GOD, THOUGH REJECTED, CANNOT BE BANISHED.** The rod which Pharaoh refuses to be shepherded by, cast down before him, springs into life. To those who refuse obedience to God's Word, that Word will cling and become a living thing. Israel thought to have done with God and to be like the heathen: it was a vain dream. Pharaoh would shake off care, and become like one of whom God had asked nothing: the dream was equally vain. We may deny God, but his words will live and pursue us.

II. **THE REJECTED GUIDANCE WILL BE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FROWARD.** The rod cast from the hand becomes a *serpent*. The vain demand for righteousness will at last become the sentence of condemnation, and the sin that is clung to, the sting of death.

III. **THE WARNING BECOMES THE LOUDER, THE GREATER THE EFFORT TO DEADEN ITS EFFECT.** The rods of the magicians were swallowed up and the rod of God left more terrible than it was before. The Divine retribution will swallow up every comfort and stay which the sinful may summon to sustain them.—U.

Vers. 8—13. *The first sign to Pharaoh: the rod becomes a serpent.* I. **NOTICE THE REMARKABLE REQUEST WHICH JEHOVAH INDICATES THAT PHARAOH MAY MAKE.** Perhaps we might even say, will make. "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you." This is a great change from his former attitude, that he should be capable of stooping to such a request. But men who have despotic power sometimes do strange and contradictory things. The freaks of tyrants in the way of a seeming liberality and kindness are among the curiosities of history. Pharaoh may have said to himself, "It will be rare sport to give this monomaniac full scope; let him with his own failure expose the delusion under which he is suffering; it may be the shortest way out of the difficulty." On the other hand, it is not at all improbable that some news of the signs wrought before Israel had percolated through all the barriers which stand between a palace and the life of the common people; and Pharaoh may have wished to discover how far the rumour was founded in reality. Though when we have said all by way of suggesting secondary causes for the request, we must come in the end to this feeling, that the only sufficient way of accounting for it is to treat it as an impulse from Jehovah himself. Certainly his providence must have much to do with gaining access to Pharaoh and keeping up the communications of Moses with him. God can lead Pharaoh, even when he knows not that he is led. Men are walking in the way of God's providence and serving his purposes, even when quite satisfied in the ignorance of their hearts that they are walking in their own way.

II. **NOTICE THE MIRACLE ITSELF.** Doubtless the rod in question was the same which had been a serpent twice already; so that by this time Moses must have looked upon it with great serenity of confidence. It is now impossible for us to say why the Lord began his manifestations of power to Pharaoh with this rather than with some other sign. Reasons discernible at the time are not discernible now; the light which would have revealed them has long since died away. We can but see that there was much in the miracle which would have taught valuable lessons to Pharaoh, if only he had received it in the simplicity of one who is really looking for truth and guidance. He would have learned not to despise the absence of promise in the external appearance of things. He would have learned that a thing is not ridiculous because it is laughed at. He would have felt, too, that as the innocent and unimposing rod became suddenly a dangerous serpent, so this Moses—humble, unsustained and impotent as he seemed—might also become all at once a destroying force utterly beyond resistance by any Egyptian defence. Nor must we forget that the choice of this particular sign may have been influenced by the fact that *the magicians had a favourite and imposing trick of their art which, to the uninstructed eye, resembled it*. They seemed to do, by their magic, what Moses really did by Divine power, and so their skill, while it had for one result a renewed defiance of Jehovah on the part of Pharaoh, had another result in this, that it led up to a strengthening of the faith of Moses. He might not be able to explain how the magicians did their wonders; but he knew very well that he was no magician himself, and that *his rod had been Divinely changed*, whatever cause had been at work to change the others. And then, at last, whatever perplexity remained in his mind was swept away when he saw the power of God rising supreme over mere trickery, and the serpent from his rod swallowing up the serpents from the other rods.

III. NOTICE THE THOROUGH WICKEDNESS OF THESE MAGICIANS. They know that their wonders are lying wonders. Powers great by nature, trained and increased with the utmost ingenuity, and which were intended to be and might have been for the good of their fellow-men, they turn without any compunction into instruments for the promotion of their selfish glory. They know that, whatever their pretences may be, they are not acting in a straightforward and humble service of supernatural power. They know that when Pharaoh puts confidence in them, he is putting confidence in a lie. Furthermore, they must have known that there was something in the transformation of Moses' rod which wanted accounting for. Magicians understand each other's tricks quite well, and it must have been evident to them that Moses was no magician. They know in their consciences that he is greater than themselves; but what can they say? Committed to lies, they must go on with them. They must pretend to have as much power as Moses, even if they have it not; and thus the induced necessities of their dark and secret arts compel them to hide the truth from Pharaoh. Nor was it any real excuse that Pharaoh was willing to be deceived. His destruction ultimately came from his own perversity; but he also presents the melancholy spectacle of being surrounded by those who, if only they had been truthful, might have interposed some obstacles in his downward way.

IV. NOTICE THE STATE IN WHICH PHARAOH WAS LEFT, EVEN AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE MIRACLE. When Aaron's rod had swallowed up the others, he still remained unimpressed. It seems as if he had allowed his attention to be fixed on one part of the miracle, while another he regarded but carelessly. When his magicians seemed to produce serpents from rods, this was just according to his inclinations, and he made much of it. Moses could do nothing more than the magicians could do. But when their serpents were swallowed up—well, it was not a very encouraging sight—but still it might be accounted for. And so we are in danger of depreciating the significance of God's works by not looking at them *in every part*. Every part is to be regarded, if we are to get the full impression of the whole. If the magicians did what Moses did, it was equally evident that Moses did what the magicians did. A child could see that his power was at least equal to theirs. If Pharaoh had not been blinded by vanity and by traditional reliance on his magicians, he would have demanded that these magicians should do something more than Moses had done. What an illustration we have here, of how, when a man gets away from right thoughts of God, he soon comes to call evil good and good evil (Isa. v. 20). Pharaoh believes his lying magicians, though he will not believe the truthful servant of a true God. He has no discriminating power to find the difference between things, which, however they may resemble each other outwardly, are yet inwardly quite opposed. He thinks that he has power enough with his gods to meet whatever power has yet been brought against him. It has been already made evident that there is no sense of pity or justice in him; and it is now made plain that he is not to be reached by the exhibition before him of a significant symbol of pain and destruction. *Pharaoh must be touched more closely still*—must be made to suffer, and suffer most dreadfully, before he will consent to let Israel go.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 14—21.—THE FIRST PLAGUE. The first miracle had been exhibited, and had failed. It had been a mere "sign," and in no respect a "judgment." Now the "judgments" were to begin. God manifests himself again to Moses, and gives him exact directions what he is to do. He is to meet Pharaoh on the banks of the Nile, and to warn him that a plague is coming upon all Egypt on account of his obstinacy; that the waters of the Nile will be turned to blood, so that the fish will die, and

the river stink, and the Egyptians loathe to drink of the water of the river (vers. 15—18). Pharaoh not yielding, making no sign, the threat is to be immediately followed by the act. In the sight of Pharaoh and his court, or at any rate of his train of attendants (ver. 20), Aaron is to stretch his rod over the Nile, and the water is at once to become blood, the fish to die, and the river in a short time to become offensive, or, in the simple and direct language of the Bible, to stink. The

commands given by God are executed, and the result is as declared beforehand by Moses (vers. 20, 21).

Ver. 14.—Pharaoh's heart is hardened. Rather, "is hard," "is dull." The adjective used is entirely unconnected with the verb of the preceding verse.

Ver. 15.—In the morning. The expression used both here and again in ch. viii. 20 seems rather to imply a daily custom of the Pharaoh. It is conjectured, not without reason, that among the recognised duties of the monarch at this time was the offering of a morning sacrifice to the Nile on the banks of the river (Keil and Delitzsch, Kalisch, etc.). Possibly, however, this may not have been the case, and God may have chosen for certain miracles particular days, on which the king was about to proceed to the river in view of some special ceremony connected with the annual inundation. Against he come. Literally, "to meet him." In their hand. When the time came for smiting the waters, the rod was transferred to Aaron's hand (ver. 19).

Ver. 16.—The Lord God . . . hath sent me unto thee. Rather, "sent me unto thee." The reference is to the original sending (ch. v. 1). Thou wouldst not hear. Literally, "Thou hast not heard," i.e. up to this time thou hast not obeyed the command given to thee.

Ver. 17.—In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord. Pharaoh had declared on the occasion specially referred to, "I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go" (ch. v. 2). He is now told that he shall "know Jehovah" in the coming visitation; he shall know, i.e., that there is a great and truly existent God who controls nature, does as he will even with the Nile, which the Egyptians regarded as a great deity; and can turn, if he see fit, the greatest blessings into curses. Behold, I will smite. God here speaks of the acts of Moses and Aaron as his own acts, and of their hands as his hand, because they were mere instruments through which he worked. The Roman law said: "Qui facit per alium, facit per se." The waters . . . shall be turned to blood. Not simply, "shall be of the colour of blood," as Rosenmüller paraphrases, but shall become and be, to all intents and purposes, blood. It is idle to ask whether the water would have answered to all the modern tests, microscopic and other, by which blood is known. The question cannot be answered. All that we are entitled to conclude from the words of the text is, that the water had all the physical appearance—the look, taste, smell, texture of blood; and hence, that it was certainly not merely discoloured by the red soil of Abyssinia, nor by cryptogamic plants and infusoria. Water thus changed would neither kill fish, nor "stink," nor be utterly undrinkable.

Ver. 18.—The fish . . . shall die. This would increase the greatness of the calamity, for the Egyptians lived to a very large extent upon fish (Birch, 'Egypt from the Earliest Times,' p. 45), which was taken in the Nile, in the canals, and the Lake Moeris (Herod. ii. 149). The river shall stink. As Keil and Delitzsch observe, "this seems to indicate putrefaction." The Egyptians shall loathe to drink. The expression is stronger in verse 24, where we find that "they could not drink." We may presume that at first, not supposing that the fluid could really be blood, they tried to drink it, took it into their mouths, and possibly swallowed some, but that very soon they found they could not continue to do so.

Ver. 19.—Say unto Aaron. There is an omission here (and generally throughout the account of the plagues) of the performance by Moses of God's behest. The Samaritan Pentateuch in each case supplies the omission. It has been argued (Kennicott) that the Hebrew narrative has been contracted; but most critics agree that the incomplete form is the early one, and that, in the Samaritan version, the original narrative has been expanded. The waters of Egypt . . . streams . . . rivers . . . ponds . . . pools of water. The waters of Lower Egypt, where this miracle was wrought, consisted of (1) the various branches of the Nile, natural and artificial, which were seven when Herodotus wrote (Herod. ii. 17), whence the Nile was called "septemfluvius," or "septemgeminus;" (2) the canals derived from each branch to fertilise the lands along its banks; (3) ponds, marshes, and pools, the results of the overflowing of the Nile, or of its percolation through its banks on either side; and (4) artificial reservoirs, wherein water was stored for use after the inundation was over. The four terms of the text seem applicable to this four-fold division, and "show an accurate knowledge of Egypt" (Cook), and of its water system. The "streams" are the Nile branches; the "rivers" correspond to the canals; the "ponds" are the natural accumulations of waters in permanent lakes or in temporary pools and marshes; while the "pools," or "gatherings of waters" (*margin*), are the reservoirs made by art. Aaron was to stretch out his rod over the Nile, but with the intent to smite all the Egyptian waters, and all the waters would at once be smitten, the streams and the canals and the natural lakes and the reservoirs. The miracle would even extend to private dwellings, and the change would take place throughout all the land of Egypt, not only in respect of the open waters spread over the country, but even in respect of that stored, as was usual, in houses, and contained either in vessels of wood or in vessels of stone. With respect to these, it is to be observed that the

Nile water was much improved by keeping, since the sediment subsided; and that tanks, sometimes of wood, sometimes of stone, were usual adjuncts of all the better class of houses.

Ver. 20.—He lifted up the rod. "He" must be understood to mean "Aaron" (see ver. 19); but the writer is too much engrossed with the general run of his narrative to be careful about *minutiae*. All that he wants to impress upon us is, that the rod was used as an instrument for the working of the miracle. He is not thinking of who it was that used it. In the sight of Pharaoh. See the comment

on ver. 15. And of his servants. Either "his courtiers generally," or, at any rate, a large troop of attendants.

Ver. 21.—The fish that was in the river died. It is most natural to understand "all the fish." There was blood, etc. Literally, "and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt." The exact intention of the phrase is doubtful, since undoubtedly "in numberless instances, the Hebrew terms which imply universality must be understood in a limited sense" (Cook). "All the land" may mean no more than "all the Delta."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 17—20.—*God's punishments appropriate and terrible (vers. 17—20).* There was something peculiarly appropriate in the first judgment falling upon the Nile. The Nile had been made the instrument of destruction to the Israelites by the first tyrannical Pharaoh (probably Seti I.). It had been defiled with the blood of thousands of innocent victims. Crocodiles had in its waters crushed the tender limbs of those helpless infants, and had stained them with a gore that in God's sight could never be forgotten. The king, and the persons who were his instruments, had in so doing polluted their own holy river, transgressed their own law, offered insults to one of the holiest of their own deities. And all for the destruction of God's people. So, now that destruction was coming upon themselves, now that the firstborn were doomed (ch. iv. 23), and the catastrophe of the Red Sea was impending, the appropriate sign, which threatened carnage, was given—the Nile was made to run with blood. The Egyptians had among their traditions one which said that the Nile had once for eleven days flowed with honey (Manetho ap. Syncell. 'Chronograph.' p. 55 A). As this supposed miracle indicated a time of peace and prosperity, so the present actual one boded war and destruction. Again, Pharaoh's especial crime at this time was, that he despised God. God therefore caused his own chief deity to be despised. There are indications that, about this period, a special Nile-worship had set in. Hapi, the Nile-god, was identified with Ptah and Ammon—he was declared to stand "alone and self-created"—to be "the Father of all the gods," "the Chief on the waters," "the Creator of all good things," "the Lord of terrors and of choicest joys." "Mortals" were said to "extol him, and the cycle of Gods"—he stood above them all as the One Unseen and Inscrutable Being. "He is not graven in marble," it was said; "he is not beheld; he hath neither ministrants nor offerings; he is not adored in sanctuaries; his abode is not known; no shrine of his is found with painted figures; there is no building that can contain him;" and again, "unknown is his name in heaven; he doth not manifest his forms; vain are all representations." ('Records of the Past,' vol. iv. pp. 107—113; vol. x. pp. 41—2.) Menephtah was a special devotee of Hapi (*ib.* vol. x. p. 38). Nothing could have seemed to him more terrible and shocking, than the conversion of his pure, clean, refreshing, life-giving, god-like stream, into a mass of revolting putridity. And on the people the judgment was still more terrible. Under ordinary circumstances, the whole nation depended on the Nile for its water supply. There were no streams in the country other than the Nile branches, no brooks, no rills, no springs or fountains. The sudden conversion of all the readily accessible water—even such as was stored in houses—into blood, was sickening, horrible, tremendous. Scarcely could any severer punishment of the people have been devised. If a partial remedy had not been found (verse 24), it would have been impossible for them to endure through the "seven days" (verse 25). So fearful are the judgments of God upon those who offend him!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 14—25.—*The Nile turned into blood.* The first of the series of plagues which fell on Egypt was of a truly terrific character. At the stretching out of the rod of Aaron, the broad, swift-flowing current of the rising Nile suddenly assumed the hue and qualities of blood. The stroke fell also on the reservoirs, canals, and ponds. Whatever connection may be traced between this plague and natural phenomena (see Hengstenberg) it is plain that it stood on an entirely different footing from changes produced under purely natural conditions. 1. The water was rendered *wholly* unfit for use. 2. It became deadly in its properties (ver. 18). 3. The stroke was instantaneous. 4. It was pre-announced. 5. It descended on the river at the summons of Moses and Aaron. 6. It lasted exactly seven days (ver. 25). An event of this kind was palpably of supernatural origin. Contrast Moses with Christ, the one beginning the series of wonders by turning the river into blood; the other, in his first miracle, turning the water into wine (John ii. 1—12). The contrast of judgment and mercy, of law and Gospel. Consider—

I. THE DEMAND RENEWED WITH THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THREAT (vers. 16—19).

1. *The demand was that which Pharaoh had hitherto resisted.* It was a demand righteous and reasonable in itself—"Let my people go," etc. It had come to him, moreover, as the command of Jehovah, and proof had been given him that such was its character. Still he had resisted it. This, however, did not dispose of the demand, which now confronts him again. 2. *The demand which Pharaoh would not freely grant, he is now to be compelled to grant.* If he will not bow to reason, to persuasion, to evidence, he must bow to power. An unprecedented calamity would overtake his land: "In this shalt thou know that I am the Lord; behold, I will smite with the rod," etc. (ver. 17). Note—(1) Reasonable means are exhausted with the sinner before compulsion is resorted to. God is unwilling to proceed to extremities. (2) Nevertheless, if gentler methods fail, means will be used which will *compel* submission. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. xiv. 11; Phil. ii. 10, 11). (3) Excuses are not admitted for wilful unbelief. Pharaoh would probably have pleaded as a ground for his refusal, that he did not believe that the command in question proceeded from Jehovah. No such plea will be admitted in the court of heaven. Every allowance will be made for involuntary ignorance, but none for wilful unbelief. What the sinner is asked to do is righteous and reasonable in itself; is made known to him as God's will; and is evidenced to be such by many infallible proofs. Refusal to acknowledge the sufficiency of this evidence does not exculpate from the guilt of disobedience. The question is not—*Does* he, or *will* he, admit its sufficiency, but *is* it sufficient? Not, *Does* it convince him? but, *Ought* it to convince him? Our errors, follies, and mistakes will not hinder the Almighty from executing his purposes. If we stand in the way of them, and will not bend, we must be crushed.

II. THE PLAGUE AS A SIGN TO EGYPT. The smiting of the Nile was—1. *A proof of the power of Jehovah* (ver. 17). It showed him to be an actually existing Being, demonstrated his supremacy in nature, and made manifest his determination to punish resistance to his will. 2. *A blow at Egyptian idolatry.* It turned the river Nile, which itself was worshipped as a divinity, into an object of loathsomeness and source of death to its worshippers. They were the *chief* gods of Egypt, too, who were supposed to be embodied in the river. How clear the proof of the vanity of the idols, and of the unchallengeable superiority of Jehovah! Yet we do not learn that one idol the less was worshipped in Egypt as the result of it. 3. *A warning of worse evil to come.* The Nile was in a sense symbolical of Egypt, of whose prosperity it was the source. The turning of this river into blood was in fact a prophecy or threat of utter ruin to the state. The succeeding plagues are merely the unfolding of the threat contained in this one. 4. *The removal of the plague at the end of seven days betokened the unwillingness of God to proceed to extremities.* It is very noticeable that the plague was removed unasked, and while Pharaoh was still hardening his heart. So long-suffering is God that he will try all means with sinners before finally giving them up. The lessons for ourselves from this plague are these—(1) The certainty of God's threatenings being executed. (2) The terrible punishments in reserve for disobedience. (3) The ease

with which God can smite a nation, and bring it to the point of ruin. The smiting of the Nile meant the immediate paralysis of all industry, commerce, and agriculture throughout the land of Egypt, while, had the plague lasted a few days longer, the result would have been the death of the whole population. We call this "miracle," but miracle is only the coming forth into visibility of the hand which is at all times working in the phenomena of nature, and in the affairs of history. By famine, by pestilence, by blight of crops, by clap of war, turning the river of a nation's life into very literal blood (so France in 1870), by the simplest natural agencies, if so it pleased him—could Jehovah speedily reduce our national pride, and smite at the fountain-heads the sources of our national prosperity. A very sensible proof was given of this—of the readiness with which the trade of a whole country could be paralysed, and great cities reduced in no long period to absolute starvation, by a slight change in natural conditions—in the great snowstorm of January 1881. (See the *Spectator* of 29th January, 1881.) Had the storm lasted but a week or two longer, the effects would have been as serious to cities like London, and to the country as a whole, as this smiting of the Nile in Egypt. (4) God's judgments are anticipative. Judgments in this life forewarn of judgments beyond.

III. THE PUERILE IMITATION OF THE MAGICIANS (ver. 22). 1. The magicians could not remove the plague; they could only with the few drops of water at their command produce a feeble imitation of it. How futile is this as a disproof of God's agency! So it is a pitiable way of disposing of God's judgments to show that something like them can be produced by undivine means. The savant, *e.g.*, may produce in his laboratory an imitation of rain or thunder, and may think that he has thereby disproved God's agency in any infliction he may send upon a land through these instrumentalities; but this is small comfort to the country that is being smitten by them. 2. The attempts of the magicians to refute the pretensions of Moses only resulted in making the supernatural character of the plague more manifest. In the same way, the efforts of sceptics to disprove, *e.g.*, the Divine origin of the religion of the Bible, or of the book itself, only end in making its Divinity more apparent. "The more conclusively you demonstrate to the human reason that that which exists ought not to exist, so much the more do you enhance the miracle of its existence. That must be the most astounding of all facts that still exists notwithstanding the gravest objections to its existence."

IV. THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH (vers. 22, 23). The hardening of Pharaoh here enters on a new phase. It was—1. Hardening against *conviction*. Pharaoh must have felt in this case that he was in presence of a true work of God. The puny efforts of his magicians could not possibly impose upon him. But he would not yield. He would not obey conviction. 2. Hardening under *punishment*. Pharaoh was in the position of one who, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck (Prov. xxix. 1). He had *risked*, even after this last warning, the chances of the threatening turning out to be untrue. Now, to his utter discomfiture, the stroke descends, and his empire is on the point of ruin. Yet he hardened himself in resistance. 3. Hardening which was *deliberate*. "Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also" (ver. 23). He had reached a point at which he could only stiffen himself in his determination to resist God, by *refusing to think*, by deliberately turning away from the light and resolving *not* to face the question of his duty. The monarch knows his duty, and *knows that he knows it*, yet he will not obey. 4. Hardening *obstinately persevered in*. He held out through all the seven days of the duration of the plague. Hardening of this kind speedily robs the soul of its few remaining sparks of susceptibility to truth.—J. O.

VERS. 14—25.—*The first plague: the water turned to blood. I. THE PLACE WHERE MOSES WAS TO MEET PHARAOH.* Moses was not always to be put to it to find his entrance into the palace. God can arrange things so that Pharaoh shall come to meet him. The instructions given to Moses at once call to our minds how Pharaoh's daughter, eighty years before, had come down to the river to find and protect a helpless babe, and how that same babe—having passed through many chequered years, and many strange experiences at the hands both of God and men—has to meet with another Pharaoh. We are not told why Pharaoh went down to the water; it may have been to worship,

for the Egyptians held the Nile in pious regard. But as the narrative says nothing on this point, we had better not assume it. It is sufficient to observe that Pharaoh was led down to the stream, to see it, the great benefactor of his land, turned into a curse (that is, if it was down to the Nile that he went. M. de Lesseps maintains that the city of the Pharaohs was not on the Nile, but on a tributary of it. See Hunter's 'Life of Lord Mayo,' vol. i. p. 132).

II. THE DISTINCT WARNING GIVEN TO PHARAOH OF WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. This warning is not peculiar to the first plague. Warning is mentioned as having been given along with most of the others, and possibly it was given where it is not mentioned. But it is of course a thing to be specially noted that God did not begin this succession of disasters without due and solemn warning. Not that there was any formal appeal to Pharaoh. It rather seems to be taken for granted that an appeal will be of no use. But even though Pharaoh disregarded, it was a good thing to say beforehand what was about to happen. Moses himself, and Aaron, and all devout Israelites who had eyes to perceive, could thus see God's plan opening out more and more. All information is good that makes us feel how God is working upon an ascertained and settled plan.

III. THE PLAGUE ITSELF. Water is changed to blood. Two of the great elements that belong to life are thus put in sharp contrast. Water is an element scarcely less distributed than the air itself. It is one of those common blessings which are so common that we take them with no manner of doubt that we are perfectly sure of them, come what may. The importance of water is seen by nothing more than by the frequent references to it in Scripture as illustrative of spiritual blessings. There is water to drink; water to cleanse; water to fertilise vegetation. This element God takes, and all at once, over a wide stretch of territory, turns it to blood. Thus we see how he can make mere natural things a blessing or a curse according to his will. Water is a blessing, and blood a blessing, according to circumstances of time and place. There is suffering when blood is where water ought to be; and equally there is suffering if water is where blood ought to be. Here there was great suffering because blood was where water was meant to be. When the people came for water to drink, to cook, to wash, to water plants, they found only blood; and yet that very blood was the same in its composition with the liquid which flowed incessantly through their own bodies. Their health depended on its richness, its purity, and the regularity of its flow. On the other hand, consider the poor man who came to Christ to be cured of the dropsy (Luke xiv. 2). He had to complain, not that blood was where water ought to be, but that water was where blood ought to be. And here we claim that this miracle is not sufficiently explained by saying that the water was turned into something like blood. We must take it that there was a conversion of the water literally into blood. We are here just at the beginning of a critical and sublime exhibition of signs and wonders. Why, then, needlessly make admissions which will diminish the force of these? Granting the supernatural at all, let us be ready to grant it to the full where the statements of the text require it. The Being who changed a rod to a serpent could change, if need were, the waters of the whole globe into blood. We should be careful not to admit, without sufficient reason, anything to diminish the horrors of this plague. What a poor picture it presents to the imagination to think of streams stained with red earth or microscopic infusoria! How much more impressive in every way—how much more consistent with high conceptions of the anger of Jehovah, and of the punitive aspect of his power—to think of blood, real blood everywhere, "vast rolling streams, florid and high-coloured," and becoming after a while, a stagnating, clotting, putrescent mass. Very fitly does Matthew Henry remark on this plague:—"One of the first miracles Moses wrought was turning water into blood, but one of the first miracles our Lord Jesus wrought was turning water into wine; for the law was given by Moses, and it was a dispensation of death and terror; but grace and truth, which, like wine, make glad the heart, came by Jesus Christ."

IV. THE APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL RIVALRY OF THE MAGICIANS. They also were able, or seemed to be able, to turn water into blood. There are, indeed, some difficulties in understanding the nature of their action here—whether it was mere trickery and deception, or whether God did allow water, as it passed through their hands, to be changed to blood. An understanding of these points is, however, of secondary importance. The thing of moment is to mark how unimpressed the magicians themselves seem to have

been with the terrible spectacle presented to them. It was not for Pharaoh only to take heed to this river of blood; the intimation was for them also. But they clung, as privileged men almost always do cling, to their position and influence. Not only was Pharaoh's kingdom in danger, but their standing as the professed agents of supernatural powers. They went on, vainly contending against this new manifestation of power, though surely in their hearts they must have felt it was destined to prevail. And their conduct was made worse by the fact that they were pursuing it in the midst of general suffering.

V. THE INTERVAL TO THE NEXT PLAGUE. What was this interval for? Surely to give Pharaoh time—time to consider the miracle in all its bearings, and get over the rashness and pride which prompted his first thoughts of continued resistance. We know not if, during these seven days, the river slowly returned to its natural state. Perhaps there was no sharp dividing line between the plagues; one may have come on as another faded away. Seven days, then, were given to Pharaoh to change his mind; but it is very hard for a man, even in seven days, to say he has been utterly wrong. And then there is the success of these magicians to keep him astray. Yet what was there in them to give satisfaction? It seemed they could do the same thing which Moses was doing, viz. change water into blood. *If only they could have changed blood into water again*, then they might have been of some use and comfort to Pharaoh.—Y.

Ver. 14—25. *The water turned into blood.* I. THE PUNISHMENT. There were two elements in it. 1. The deprivation: water, one of the most essential of all God's gifts, was suddenly made useless. 2. The horror. Had all the water of Egypt suddenly disappeared, the punishment had been infinitely less. Instead of water, there was blood and corruption. 3. It was a judgment on Egypt's idolatry. The things we set in God's stead will be made an abomination and a horror to us. 4. It was the revelation of Egypt's guilt; beneath these waters the babes of Israel had sunk in their hopeless struggle with death. The abused gifts of God will be removed, but the horror of their abuse will abide.

I. THE ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT GOD'S AGENCY IN THE CALAMITY. The magicians could increase the plague, and therefore it was not from the hand of God! The same argument is used still to prevent misfortune being considered as a chastisement and warning from God. Men can see in it chance only, or man's hand, not the Lord's.

III. PHARAOH'S DOGGED REFUSAL TO OBEY. He "turned and went into his house" (ver. 23). This would prolong his punishment, but could not conquer God. Instead of bowing to God's word, we may shut ourselves in with our sin, but we only bind judgment upon us, and tempt God to inflict a heavier blow.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 22, 23.—On the occurrence of the second sign and first plague, the magicians were again consulted; and, by means which it is impossible to do more than conjecture, they produced a seeming transformation into blood of a certain quantity of water. The inquiry, whence they procured the water, is answered by ver. 24. That they actually turned water into blood is scarcely asserted in the vague "did so" of ver. 22. Perhaps they had recourse to sleight of hand, and made a substitution, like modern conjurers; perhaps they merely turned the water of a red colour. All that was necessary was to convince Pharaoh that they were able to do what Moses and Aaron had done—there was no one to watch,

and test, and examine their pretended miracle which consequently passed muster, though it may have been no more than a trick. Pharaoh, however, suffered himself to be convinced, and "turned and went into his house," without paying any attention to the marvel wrought (ver. 23).

Ver. 22.—The magicians of Egypt did so. They could not do what Moses and Aaron had done—stretch out, that is, a rod over the Nile, and turn it and all its branches, and ponds, and pools, into blood, for *this was already done*. They could only show their skill upon some small quantity of water in a cup or other vessel. No doubt they produced some apparent change, which was accepted by Pharaoh as an equivalent to what had been effected by the

Israelite chiefs, but which must have fallen far short of it. Pharaoh would not be a severe critic.

Ver. 23.—Pharaoh turned—i.e. "returned"—quitted the river-bank, satisfied with what the magicians had done, and went back to the

palace. Neither did he set his heart to this also. A better translation is that of Boothroyd—"Nor did he lay even this to heart." In the expression "even this" there is an allusion to the previous neglect of the first sign (ver. 13).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The power of Satan is with all deceivableness.* Satan himself, and wicked men, his instruments, are especially strong in the power of deception. Satan deceived Eve (1 Tim. ii. 14). The lying spirit deceived Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 22). Rebekah and Jacob together deceived Isaac. Gehazi deceived Naaman. Bad men are clever and plausible, and keensighted, and painstaking, and careful—they lay their plans skilfully, and carry them out boldly, and are usually successful. The magicians had not only their own credit at stake, but also that of the priests, who were in league with them. They would not be very scrupulous what means they used, so that they could persuade the Pharaoh that whatever Moses and Aaron could do, they could do: and they succeeded. The "father of lies" no doubt suggested to them some clever method of seeming to perform the same sort of miracle as the Israelitish leaders had performed—they adopted it, and cheated the eyes of the beholders. When men wished to nip the religion of Christ in the bud, they called its Founder "that deceiver" (Matt. xxvii. 63). Deceit is a device of Satan. In nothing are the powers of light and darkness more contrasted than in the simpleness, the straightforward sincerity that characterises the former, and the crookedness, the tortuousness, the insincerity that goes with the latter. He who is "the Way" and "the Life," is also "the Truth." All who would have fellowship with him must "walk in truth."

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 24—25.—Necessity is the mother of invention. Finding the Nile water continue utterly undrinkable, the Egyptians bethought themselves of a means of obtaining water to which they never had recourse in ordinary times. This was to dig pits or wells at some distance from the river, and so obtain the moisture that lay in the ground, no doubt derived from the river originally, but already there before the change of the water into blood took place. This, it appears, remained water, and was drinkable, though probably not very agreeable, since, owing to the nitrous quality of the soil in Egypt, well-water has always a bitter and brackish taste. It sufficed, however, for drinking and culinary purposes during the "seven days" that the plague continued (ver. 25).

Ver. 24.—*All the Egyptians digged.* Not the Hebrews. The water stored in the houses of the Hebrews in reservoirs, cisterns, and the like, was (it would seem) not vitiated; and this would suffice for the consumption of seven days. *Water to drink.* Blood would not become water by percolation through earth, as Canon Cook appears to think ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. p. 278); but there might have been sufficient water in the ground before the plague began, to fill the wells dug, for seven days.

Ver. 25.—*And seven days were fulfilled.* This note of time has been regarded as merely fixing the interval between the first plague and the second. But it is more natural to regard it as marking the duration of the first plague. The intervals between one plague and another are nowhere estimated.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 24.—*God allows men to seek and obtain alleviations of his judgments.* We are not intended to sit down under the judgments of God, and fold our hands, and do nothing. Whether it be war, or pestilence, or famine, or any other Heaven-sent calamity that comes upon us for our sins and those of our nation, we must beware of sinking into apathy under the infliction, and allowing it simply to run its course. God

does not desire that we should show our submission in this way. He gives us thought, and ingenuity, and inventiveness, that in every difficulty we may devise remedies, and so lessen our own and our neighbours' sufferings. Oriental nations view each calamity that comes upon them as *Kismet*, "fate," and make no exertions to meet it, stem it, minimise it. Christians should act otherwise. They should so far imitate the Egyptians as to set to work actively, to do what can be done in the way of relief and alleviation. God freely allows this. He did not punish the Egyptians for digging, or frustrate their efforts by preventing the water that was in the ground from filling the wells, or by rendering it undrinkable. And so he allows cholera or plague, or even ordinary sickness, which is his judgment on an individual, to be met by care, attention, cleanliness, remedial measures, and is so far from interfering against such exertions, that he blesses them, and for the most part renders them effectual.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Chaps. vii.—x.—*The great conflict*. "For I will at this time send all my plagues," etc.: Ex. ix. 14. Keeping the last tremendous visitation apart, for it stands out in lone grandeur in the story, it is well to take the other nine plagues together in any homiletic use we make of them; for—1. They have many features in common. 2. And are closely connected with one another. A landscape should not be cut up, when we can see at a sweep the whole panorama. The subject, then, is Jehovah's conflict with this great idolatrous world-power.

I. THE AGENT. What was Moses? What was his Divine legation? 1. He was a *patriot-deliverer*, ranking with Tell, Bruce, etc. etc., as the saviour of his nation—but more! 2. A *statesman*—the creator (under God) of first a polity, and then a nation. He taught free men to govern themselves, under God. But Moses was more! 3. A *prophet of the living God*. Moses was intensely religious. He ranks with the greatest spiritual leaders of the world. His peer is Elijah, though Elijah was not quite equal. So great are they both that they appear on Tabor with the transfigured Lord. God, eternity, the soul, law, salvation, religion are the master motives of this great spirit. All that Moses was besides is to be traced to this deep root. The lesson is obvious: religion first—then the things that accompany salvation.

II. HIS DEEDS. 1. *Their historic reality*. Two facts certain—(1) Israel in Egypt. (2) Israel in Canaan. The historic problem is: How was the transition made? (1) Kings are not in the habit of emancipating races (note! apparent exceptions—William III. and Revolution of 1688. Emancipation of serfs by the Russian Czar. Lincoln and the freedom of the four millions of slaves.) (2) Israel never won its own freedom. Nor (3) was Egypt overthrown by a foreign power, and so in the confusion Israel emerged to liberty. (4) The Deliverer was God, and the mode, that described in the book. 2. *Their exact nature*. Exposition here of the miracles *seriatim*, with a careful note of the specialities of each. This as a foundation for the discussion of the question: Were the plagues natural or supernatural? They were either (1) natural; or (2) supernatural; or (3) natural in kind, but supernatural in degree, in circumstances and in concomitants. See ch. x. 12, 19; xiv. 21. Our view is the last. But that the visitations were direct from the hand of God is clear from—(1) Their colossal proportions. (2) Their concentration upon one epoch. (3) Their relation to the moral controversy. (4) Their gradation. (5) Dependence on the word of Moses. [On the evidential value of the plagues, see 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. i. 241.] 3. *Their objective*. This word here used in a military sense. What was the Divine object in these visitations? To hurl thunderbolts against the idolatries of Egypt: Ex. xii. 12. For detail, see Dr. Alexander's *Kitto's Cyclopedia*, p. 751, vol. i. 4. *Their superiority* to the acts of the magicians. Full discussion of the questions—What the magicians really did, and how they did it, will be found in the Congregational Lectures by Rev. Walter Scott, of Airedale College, on "The Existence of Evil Spirits," 145—156. The conclusion, sustained by argument, is that they were adepts in sleight of hand. But, for homiletic purposes, show the grandeur of the scale on which Moses acted, and the imposing character of his deeds as a moral demonstration to the idolaters of Egypt. 5. *Their climacteric character*. When God deals with sinners, he begins afar

off, and only **very** gradually draws near and close to their deepest life and acutest feeling. So here he touches first the river—then comfort (frogs, lice, flies)—then cattle—then the skin of the people—then food (hail and locusts)—then threatens life by the suffocating effects of the fifty days' sand-storm darkness—at last life itself. "I will sing of *mercy*" as well as "of judgment," etc.

III. HIS WORDS. Fine homiletic use may be made of the verbal controversy which went on between Moses and Pharaoh all the time of these visitations, and which increased in tragic vehemence as blow after blow descended. Note Pharaoh's waverings, relentings, and anon persistence; and also the occasional passionate entreaties of the hardened sinner on behalf of the awestruck and repentant people. But "whom the gods purpose to destroy they first of all madden."

IV. EFFECTS. 1. *On the Egyptians.* Leading some finally to attach themselves to the redeemed of the Lord. 2. *On Moses.* Called to a stupendous work. Timid. Trained to confidence in God, and obedience to his slightest word. Note!—So God is ever training his servants. 3. *On Israel,* through Moses.

V. LESSONS. The main ones of this great controversy. 1. *The object of God in dealing with men.* To beat down the idolatries of the human heart—to reveal himself—his law—his salvation—to reconcile men with himself. 2. *The inevitable conflict,* i.e. until God's purpose be accomplished. Show the reality of this conflict in the case of every sinner. Message after message, mercy after mercy, judgment after judgment. If men will not be reconciled, then there must be antagonism; to that antagonism there can be but one end. It is *in this sense* that Amos challenges Israel—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." This is the word of the Lord as "a man of war." 3. *The futility of the repentance of fear.* Case of Pharaoh. Case of every sinner. Fear, however, has its mission—to awaken to concern. But no repentance is solid, lasting in its effect, but that which takes place in view of the love of our Father as seen in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.—R.

Chaps. vii.—x.—"*The Lord, he is the God.*" Egypt was a pleasant land—"the garden of the Lord" (Gen. xiii. 10). The river, the source of its fertility, was fenced off from desert on either side by cliff ranges—canopied from morning to evening by the ever blue, bright sky. No wonder that the inhabitants should think much of such a land, that they should come to say of river, land, sky, "These be thy gods, O Egypt!" The veil of nature, which should reveal—as by shadow cast on sheet—may hide, the unseen God: cf. Rom. i. 20. The struggle with Pharaoh shows us God asserting himself—proving himself "God of gods" as well as "Lord of lords." Regarding the river as the source of fertility; the land as the sphere for fertility; the sky as the guardian of fertility—see how God openly manifests the dependence of each and all on him.

I. THE RIVER. "The beneficent Nile, the very life of the state and of the people" (Stanley). (1) Middle of June—season of annual overflow. To all appearance more than ever divine—Pharaoh (ch. vii. 15) probably openly acknowledging its divinity. Suddenly turned into blood—loathsome; no longer a source of fertility, but a source of corruption and death—at the command of Jehovah, the unrecognised invisible Source whence the fertilising power had been derived. (2) Later. Subsidence of the water. The river mud seems to breed frogs. Compelled at the Divine command to fructify not grain but reptiles. (3) Later. Even the dust of the sun-dried mud turned by Jehovah into a tormenting pest. "The river is mine, and the soil which it deposits is mine; even the very dust which it leaves is mine. Have not I, the Lord, made all these things?"

II. THE LAND. So far the river has been made to plague the land; but Jehovah needs no intermediary. He has direct power over the land also. (1) Chap. viii. 21, 22. Swarms of flies (gnats) coming up as it were out of the ground. Yet land severed from land—Goshen spared, "so that thou mayest know that I am Jehovah in the midst of the land." (2) Chap. ix. 3. Murrain in the cattle—the creatures most nearly connected with the land; identified with its prosperity; deified as its representatives—at a set time, within appointed limits. (3) Chap. ix. 9. Pestilence on man and beast. The furnace-ash strewn heavenwards. The land as modified by human agency turned into a plague upon the men who used it. "The land is mine, and the cattle are mine, the

very furnace-ash which ye might almost claim as *self-made* is mine. Have not I, the Lord, made all these things?"

III. THE SKY. The previous plague (chap. ix. 8) "toward the heaven," seems to challenge the sky divinities. Now they also are to be proved subject. 1. Chap. ix. 22. At the word of Jehovah the protector becomes the devastator. Clouds gather and pour out water. Pharaoh and Egypt, too, shall know that the earth belongs to no sky divinity, but to Jehovah: chap. v. 29. 2. Chap. x. 13. The winds, compelled into Jehovah's service, become charioteers for his locust armies. 3. Chap. x. 21. The sun, source of light, chief of the gods—even he is draped in darkness at the word of Jehovah. "The sky is mine with its clouds and winds, even the sun in all his glory. Have not I, the Lord, made all these things?"

Application:—People still forget God—still, practically, deify his gifts, and so plant them as to hide the Giver of them. The world, our respectable every-day world, not unlike Egypt. Health (life, ζωή), the river that fertilises it. Circumstances (life, βίος), the land fertilised. Thought, intelligence, wisdom, the sky which seems to canopy and protect both. Deify them and forget the God above them, and God will yet manifest himself by strange plagues on your divinities. Your river shall be turned into blood, and your sun into darkness [cf. Tennyson, "Palace of Art."] These things, too—health, happiness, intelligence—he will surely show that he and no other has made them all.—G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—7.—THE SECOND PLAGUE. After an interval which there are no means of estimating, the second plague followed the first. Again, while the main purpose of the plague was to punish the nation by which Israel had been so long oppressed, the secondary object of throwing contempt upon their religion was maintained. Frogs were among the Egyptian sacred animals. One of their deities, Heka, was a frog-headed goddess; and they seem to have regarded the frog as a sacred emblem of creative power. The great multiplication of frogs, whereby they became an annoyance and a curse, was a trial and strain to the entire Egyptian religious system. The Egyptians might not kill them; yet they destroyed all their comfort, all their happiness. Their animal-worship was thus proved absurd and ridiculous. They were obliged to respect the creatures which they hated—to preserve the animals they would fain have swept from the face of the earth. It is perhaps somewhat difficult for modern Europeans to imagine the plague that frogs might be. The peculiar kind, which has the scientific name of *Rana Moscovica*, resembles our toad, and is a disgusting object, which crawls rather than leaps, and croaks perpetually. To have the whole country filled with these disgusting reptiles, to be unable to walk in the streets without treading on them, to find them not only occupying

one's doorstep but in possession of one's house, in one's bed-chamber, and upon one's bed, to hear their dismal croak perpetually, to see nothing but their loathsome forms whithersoever one looked, to be in perpetual contact with them and feel the repulsion of their cold, rough, clammy skin, would be perhaps as severe a punishment as can well be conceived. Nations are known to have deserted their homes, and fled to a foreign land to escape from it. "In Pæonia and Dardania," says Phœnias, a disciple of Aristotle, "there appeared once suddenly such a number of frogs, that they filled the houses and the streets. Therefore—as killing them, or shutting the doors, was of no avail; as even the vessels were full of them, the water infected, and all food uneatable; as they could scarcely set their foot upon the ground without treading on heaps of them, and as they were vexed by the smell of the great numbers which died—they fled from that region altogether" (Eustath. ad Hom. II. i. p. 35). In Egypt, the young frogs come out of the waters in the month of September, when the inundation is beginning to subside. Even now they sometimes amount to a severe visitation.

Ver. 1.—Go unto Pharaoh. The second plague is given simply as a plague, not as a sign. It is first threatened (ver. 2), and then accomplished (ver. 6), an interval being allowed, that Pharaoh might change his mind, and escape the plague, if he chose.

Ver. 2.—Frogs. The word used for "frog,"

viz. tsēparda, is thought to be Egyptian, and to remain (abbreviated) in the modern *dofda*, which is in common use, and designates the species known to naturalists as "*Rana Mosaica*."

Ver. 3.—The river shall bring forth frogs. The frogs do not often come directly out of the river. They are bred in the pools and marshes which the Nile leaves as it is retiring. These, however, may be viewed as detached fragments of the river. *Thine house . . . thy bed-chamber . . . thy bed.* The extreme cleanliness of the Egyptians (Herod. ii. 37) rendered this visitation peculiarly disagreeable to them. The frogs under ordinary circumstances do not think of entering houses. *Ovens* in Egypt were probably baking-pans. These were heated from within by a fire of wood, which was withdrawn after a time and the

dough attached by pressure to the interior of the vessels. *Kneading-troughs* were vessels in which the dough was prepared. Both these and ovens are represented in the Egyptian tombs. (See Rosellini, 'Mon. Civ.' pl. 84, 85.)

Ver. 5.—Over the streams . . . rivers . . . ponds. See the comment on ch. vii. 19.

Ver. 6.—The frogs came up. Literally, "The frog came up," the word being used to designate the class or species.

Ver. 7.—The magicians did so . . . and brought up frogs. Here again, as in their imitation of the first plague (ch. vii. 22), sleight of hand may have been the means employed by the magicians; or possibly they may have merely claimed that their enchantments "brought up" frogs, which were in reality the consequence of Aaron's act (ver. 2).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1—8.—*God can scourge men beyond endurance with a whip of straw.* A frog seems an innocent and harmless reptile enough, not pleasing nor attractive, but scarcely calculated to cause much suffering. When the Egyptians made frogs sacred, they had no notion of one day finding them an intolerable annoyance. But God can make, of the least of his creatures, a weapon to wound, a whip to scourge men. Minute microscopic fungi and entozoa destroy crops and wither up the human frame. Huge ships are utterly ruined by the working of the *Teredo nautilus*. White ants bring down houses. And so, on this occasion, poor weak frogs made the lives of the Egyptians a burthen to them. Forced to tread on them as they walked, to feel them crawling upon their naked feet, to see them covering the floors of their chambers and the soft cushions of their beds, finding them in their ovens, their kneading-troughs, the culinary and other vessels, scarcely able to keep them out of their food, always hearing their melancholy croak, the unfortunate wretches had not a moment's comfort or peace. Constant dropping wears out a stone. A trivial annoyance becomes intolerable by repetition and persistence. Thus, even the obdurate Pharaoh, who had borne the first plague till God chose to remove it without a symptom of yielding, is cowed by the second plague, and "calls for Moses and Aaron" (ver. 8).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1—39.—*Three plagues—frogs, lice, flies.* On the precise character of these three plagues, see the exposition. They are to be viewed in their relation to the Egyptians—1. As an intensification of the natural plagues of the land. 2. As a proof of the almightiness of Jehovah (see on ch. vii. 17), and of the folly of further contest with him (vers. 10, 22). 3. As a demonstration of the vanity of the idols. The Egyptian gods were utterly powerless to aid their worshippers. There was not the shadow of help to be derived from them. This was the more remarkable that several of the gods were worshipped as protectors from the very classes of plagues which were here brought upon the country. There were fly-gods, to protect against flies, deities to protect against frogs, etc. And the defeat of the idols was remarkable from this other fact, that several of the agents employed as scourges of Egypt were themselves ranked as deities. This was the case with the river, and with many of the creatures, e.g. the beetle, probably included under "flies." 4. The removal of the plagues when Pharaoh showed signs of submission, was a proof of God's mercy, and a token to the monarch of his sincerity in his dealings with him generally. Taken in connection with Pharaoh's behaviour under them, the three plagues read us valuable lessons. They teach—

I. THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN THE KINGDOM OF NATURE. All creatures, all agencies,

are under his control. They come and go, march and countermarch, act in separation or combination, at his pleasure. He sent the hornets before the Israelites to drive out the Amorites from their strong castles (ch. xxii. 23). He frequently punished Israel by sending armies of locusts to devour the produce of the fields (Joel i. ii.; Amos iv.). Jehovah was at the head of these armies (Joel ii. 11), and so was he at the head of the armies of frogs, gnats, flies, and other noxious insects that drove the Egyptians to a state of desperation. This is a striking thought, in as full accordance with a sound philosophy and with the facts presented to us in nature, as with the teaching of Christ, who bids us see the Father's hand even in the fall of a sparrow. What account can be given, e.g., of the migratory instincts of birds, save that suggested by this thought of Jehovah's rule, regulating their motions, and guiding them in their long and perilous journeys (Jer. viii. 7). He rules. He alone rules. "An idol is nothing" (1 Cor. viii. 4).

II. THE IMPOTENCE OF MAN IN THE HANDS OF JEHOVAH. 1. *God's entire control of all things in creation gives him command of exhaustless resources for the punishment of his enemies.* When the river was healed at the end of seven days, Pharaoh may have thought that his trouble had blown past—that the plagues were at an end. But lo! a new plague is brought upon him, of which he had never dreamed, a plague of "frogs," also from the river. Then in swift successive strokes came the plagues of gnats, of mixed insects, of murrain of beasts, of boils, etc., each breaking out from some new and totally unexpected quarter. If ever the Egyptians thought, Surely the arrows in the quiver of this mighty god are at length all spent, they were speedily undeceived by the breaking forth upon them of some fresh plague. The Almighty's quiver is not thus easily exhausted. There is at every stage in his chastisements an infinite reserve of power to chastise us further, and in new forms. 2. *Natural agents are a frequent means by which God chastises the rebellious.* It is really a truer philosophy which sees God behind all action of natural force, and all movements of the irrational creatures, than that which sees only second causes, only laws and instincts, and refuses to recognise the Supreme Orderer in their movements and combinations. There need be no scruple in acknowledging second causes, or even, in a sense, a reign of unvarying law; but the "laws" of nature are one thing, and the "course" of nature another, and this latter the Theist believes to be no more of chance than the former, while the Christian is taught to trace a Divine purpose and end in its minutest ramifications. Hail, snow, fire, and vapour; stormy wind; rain and thunder; insect and reptile life; plague and famine; disease in its myriad forms—all are weapons in the hands of God by which he can fulfil his righteous will to punish. 3. *The minutest forms of life are used by God as his sorest scourges.* Thomas Scott acutely remarks that the plagues would have been easier to bear, and would not have been felt to be so humiliating, had the agents in them been lions and tigers, or other animals of the nobler sort; or perhaps foreign enemies. There would at least have been dignity in succumbing to the attacks of hordes of powerful foes. But how intolerably humiliating to be conquered by shoals of frogs or by insignificant and contemptible creatures like lice and flies! Yet Pharaoh could more easily have contended with the former classes of enemies than with these latter. One army can charge another with at least some chance of success; and protection is possible against enemies that are of a size which admits of their being shot, hunted, trapped, or kept out by walls and defences; but nothing of this kind is possible with the minuter creatures. It was impossible to erect defences against locusts; and to this hour, man is helpless against their ravages. A stray Colorado beetle may be put to death; but if that form of life were developed to but a small extent among us, it would be impossible to shield ourselves effectually from its destructive operations. Numbers of diseases have now been traced to the presence of germs in the atmosphere and in our food and drink, and it is the very minuteness of these germs—their microscopic and infinitesimal character—which makes them so deadly and so difficult to cope with. When the potato disease appeared in 1846, nothing could be done to check its spread, and little can be done yet to guard against its assaults! The fungus is of a kind which eludes our efforts to deal with it. Plague and pestilence (Plague of London, Black Death, Cholera, etc.), while depending to a very large extent on material conditions for their development, yet seem connected in their origin with similar organic germs. In this whole wide region, accordingly, God has under his control potent invisible agencies, which ordinarily his providence keeps in check, but which at any hour might

be converted into most terrific scourges. He has at command a literally exhaustless array of weapons with which to assail us, if we provoke his chastisements; armies countless in numbers, invisible in form, unseen in their modes of attack, and against which no weapons can be forged likely to secure safety. As knowledge advances, means are discovered for partially protecting ourselves against this or that disorder (sanitary science, vaccination, etc.); but just as, perhaps, we are beginning to think with the Egyptians that the evil day is past, some new plague develops itself (e.g. the potato murrain) of which formerly we had no conception. We are still in God's hands and as helpless as ever. The "last days" will probably be marked by a singular intensification of natural plagues (Luke xxi. 25; Rev. xvi. 1—12).

III. THE POSSIBILITIES OF RESISTANCE TO GOD THAT LIE IN HUMAN NATURE. It might have been judged impossible that, after being convinced, as Pharaoh at an early stage in these proceedings must have been, of the reality and power of the Being with whom he was contending—that he was indeed Jehovah, the God of the whole earth—the monarch should still have persevered in his mad resistance. Twice, in the course of this chapter, he is brought to the point of acknowledging the futility of further opposition; yet, immediately on the plague being removed, he reverts to the policy of non-submission. He must have known that he had nothing to gain by it. If he was infatuated enough at first to think that the Almighty, having removed one plague, could not, or would not, send another, he must have been speedily disabused of that impression. It was no longer a question of self-interest with him, for the loss and gain caused by these successive plagues more than counterbalanced any gain he could hope to derive from the retention of the Israelites. Neither had he on his side, in opposition to this command of the Hebrews' God, the least shadow of right or reason, with which to sustain himself. Yet without one conceivable motive save that furnished by his own pride and obstinacy, and by hatred of the Being who was thus coercing him, Pharaoh continued to resist. Conquered for the moment, he returned to his defiant attitude the instant pressure was removed. And this defiant attitude he maintained, with increasing hardness of heart till the very end. Here then we see the possibility of a being finally resisting grace. It appals us to think of the possibilities of resistance to the Almighty thus lying in the constitution of our wills, but the fact is not to be ignored. It is a proof of our original greatness. It reveals to us our immortality. It shows us the possibility of a final loss of the soul. If it be thought that Gospel influences are certain to accomplish that which could not be expected by terrors and judgments, and that changes may be wrought in eternity, which cannot be wrought in time, we have to remember that an even worse hardening is possible under the dispensation of the Son and Spirit than was possible to Pharaoh, and that human nature in the future state is essentially the same as human nature now. No good reason can be shown why a will which resists all that God can do to subdue it here may not from the same motives resist all gracious influences brought to bear on it hereafter. No one, at least, looking to the possibilities of resistance manifested on earth, could guarantee that it will not do so. The tendency to a fixed state of the will in evil as in good, renders the possibility of an ultimate recovery of those who habitually resist light here extremely problematical, even on the grounds of philosophy. If we turn to Scripture, it is difficult to see what warrant we have to expect it. The dream of a future dispensation of grace, and of universal restoration, must find support somewhere else than in its statements. If we accept the plain teaching of Christ and the Apostles, there are those who will finally resist, and their number will not be few. The gift of will is a great, but it is also an infinitely perilous one. Even Dr. Farrar says, "I cannot tell whether some souls may not resist God for ever, and therefore may not be for ever shut out from his presence" (*Mercy and Judgment*, p. 485).

IV. GOD'S READINESS TO BE ENTREATED OF THE SINNER. Though Pharaoh had hardened himself so obstinately, yet, on the first signs of his relenting, mercy was shown to him (ver. 9). There was on God's part, even a *hastening* to be gracious. Pharaoh was taken at his word. He was *trusted*. No guarantees were taken from him that he would fulfil his word, save his simple promise. God might have delayed the removal of the plague till the actual order for Israel's departure from the land had been given. But the plague was removed at once, that Pharaoh might be left to his freedom, and that his heart might be won by the exhibition of the divine goodness to him. And this

was done, not merely on the first, but on the second occasion of his entreaty, and after his first promise had been broken (ver. 29). So willing is God to do the sinner every justice, and to grant him every opportunity, which may result in his salvation. He does not wait for complete conversion, but welcomes in man the first signs of a disposition to return to Him. He is as plenteous in mercy as He is severe in judgment, if mercy is de-pised.

V. THE EFFECT OF CONTINUED IMPENITENCE IN PRODUCING INCREASED HARDNESS OF HEART. It is obvious from this chapter that Pharaoh was making rapid progress in hardening himself. Going back a stage or two, we can trace that progress in very marked degrees. We find him hardening himself—1. Against a miracle which was plainly from God, but which he tried to persuade himself was only a work of magic—the conversion of the rod into a serpent. 2. Against a miracle which he knew to be from God, but against the influence of which his obstinacy enabled him to hold out—the turning of the Nile into blood. 3. Against a miracle which he not only knew to be from God, but which convinced him of the hopelessness of further resistance, and which was removed from him at his own request—the plague of frogs. 4. Against his own promise to release the Israelites. 5. Against a miracle which even his magicians failed to imitate, and declared to be the finger of God, (ver. 19)—the plague of lice. Having broken his promise, Pharaoh now felt, probably, that he must brave it out. 6. Against a miracle which showed yet more distinctly that the work was God's by the difference which was put between the Egyptians and the Israelites dwelling in Goshen—the plague of flies (vers. 22, 23). This seems to have produced a powerful impression upon the king, and he again besought the removal of the plague. 7. Against a second solemn promise, and after being expressly warned against deceitful dealing (ver. 29). As the result of all, Pharaoh was acquiring *facility* in hardening himself, was rapidly losing his susceptibility to truth, was becoming infatuated in his obstinacy, and was strengthening his will in the *habit* of resistance. Thus fatally does hardening make progress!—J. O.

Vers. 1—16.—*The plague of frogs.* Observe on this plague, in addition to what has been said above.

I. PHARAOH'S HARDNESS UNDER THE FIRST PLAGUE WROUGHT NO ESCAPE, EITHER FROM THE DIVINE COMMAND OR FROM THE DIVINE POWER (ver. 1). He probably thought, now that the river was healed, that he had done with Jehovah's demand, and perhaps congratulated himself that he had succeeded in holding out. But divine commands are not thus to be got rid of. They are not to be got rid of by resistance. They are not to be got rid of even by braving out the penalty. They come back and back to us, and always with the old alternative, obey, or incur new punishment. Our most furious opposition cannot rid us of the obligation of rendering to Jesus in the Gospel "the obedience of faith," nor shall we escape judgment if we refuse.

II. THE SECOND PLAGUE INDUCED A SUBMISSION WHICH THE FIRST FAILED TO EXTRACT (ver. 8). It was submission under compulsion, but it testified to a remarkable change in the king's views about Moses and Jehovah. It was not long since he had been erecting himself in his pride in supreme defiance of both. Moses and Aaron he had treated as base-born slaves, and had ordered them back to their burdens (ch. v. 4). He had scorned the message of their God, and had shown his contempt for it by heaping new insults on Jehovah's worshippers. So impressed was even Moses by his lordly greatness, that he had shrunk from exposing himself to the proud king's despite. He thought it was useless for him to attempt to go to Pharaoh. Very different were Pharaoh's ideas about Moses and Jehovah now he had been smitten by the invisible hand of this God with these two reeling blows, and already he was on his knees asking for deliverance. The vaunting sinner will change his views of the living God when once he falls into His hands.

III. THE SECOND PLAGUE REVERSED THE RELATIONS OF MOSES AND PHARAOH, MAKING PHARAOH THE SUITOR, AND MOSES THE PERSON SUED TO (ver. 8). What a humiliation to this haughty monarch! How much better for himself had he yielded at first, and with a good grace, to the righteous demand made upon him! Nothing is gained by resistance to God, but ultimate pain and humiliation. As Pharaoh was humbled, as Moses was exalted. He began to be "a god" to Pharaoh. Like reversals of the

positions of the great ones of the world and despised servants of God have frequently been witnessed. Compare Paul and Felix (Acts xxiv. 25); Paul and the centurion, in the shipwreck at Malta (Acts xxviii.).

IV. THE SECOND PLAGUE RAISED MOSES TO NEW HONOURS BY MAKING HIS INTERCESSION THE MEDIUM OF DELIVERANCE (vers. 9—12). God *might* have removed the plague at Pharaoh's simple request, conveyed to him by Moses. In point of fact, he made the intercession of Moses the condition and medium of it. The same thing is seen in the history of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 41—46). This, 1. Put honour upon Moses. 2. Taught the value of "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" (Gen. xviii. 23—33; Jas. i. 15—18). 3. Gave Moses himself a deeper interest in the event. 4. Trained him for the higher function of mediation on behalf of Israel. It would give him confidence in intercession, would enable him to realise the reality of his power with God, would help in developing the faculty of earnest and sustained prayer. 5. It shadowed forth the higher mediation. Pharaoh was so abandoned in evil, so insincere even in his repentance, that his request, as it were, could only become prevailing when taken up by a holier nature and presented as its own. This is the key to all spiritual intercession, and involves the principle which reaches its full expression in the mediation of our Saviour.

V. THE REMOVAL OF THE PLAGUE RESULTED IN PHARAOH'S BREAKING OF HIS PROMISE, AND IN HIS FURTHER HARDENING. The severity of the plague had for the moment unmanned him. His power of further resistance had broken down. But the *will* to resist was not in the least altered, and when the plague was removed, his obstinate disposition reasserted itself, and produced new rebellion. Rage and pride must at this crisis have overpowered reason, as well as conscience, for Pharaoh could hardly doubt but that his breach of promise would bring new trouble upon him. He *did*, however, return to his contumacy, and by the act cut down another of the bridges which might have conducted him back to peace with God, and to safety and honour in his kingdom. Terror of any kind, the approach, perhaps, of death, or of what seems to threaten death, often produces quakings of soul, and transient repentances. If these are not followed up on recovery—if recovery or escape is granted—they react to induce a very special hardening. A heart seldom gets the better of vows made in a season of deep sorrow, and afterwards, with the return of health and prosperity, renounced.

VI. MINOR LESSONS. 1. God's visitations are not vague and general. They will find us out in every sphere and department of our lives. His stroke will be felt in everything (vers. 3, 4). 2. The power of God's servants (vers. 5, 6: 12, 13). The stretching out of the rod brought frogs on Egypt. The intercession of Moses removed them. The prayers of a good man are both to be feared and to be desired. Feared, if they are against us; desired, if they are for us. It is lawful to pray, not for the ruin of our enemies' souls, but for the discomfiture of their projects, and the overthrow of their ungodly schemes (Rev. xi. 5, 6). 3. The duty of courtesy, and of returning good for evil (vers. 9, 10). Moses, at the very time of his triumph over Pharaoh, treated him with studious respect, and was ready to pray, at his request, for the removal of the plague. 4. The power of life and death as vested in God (vers. 13, 14). 5. Man's abuse of God's kindness (ver. 15). A respite granted; *therefore* Pharaoh hardened himself (cf. Rom. ii. 4).—J. O.

Vers. 1—15. *The second plague: the frogs.* In intimating the first plague, Moses made no formal demand upon Pharaoh to liberate Israel, though of course the demand was really contained in the intimation. But now as the second plague approaches, the formal demand once again is heard. Pharaoh is left for no long time without a distinct appeal which he must face either with consent or refusal. And so now Moses addresses him in the same words as on his first visit: "Let my people go." It is a challenge to the man who holds by violence and brute force that which is not his own. It is not a mere combat between potentate and potentate. "That they may serve me,"—awful is the wickedness of hindering God's people from serving *him*.

I. NOTICE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS SECOND PLAGUE. Hitherto there has been something evidently sublime in God's treatment of Pharaoh. God's treatment is of course always sublime; but up to this point even Pharaoh must have felt that he was being treated as a king ought to be treated. The messengers of Jehovah were only

mean men in appearance, but the first plague itself was certainly an impressive one. We may imagine that Pharaoh would even say to himself with a sort of proud satisfaction, "How great my power must be when all the waters of my land are turned to blood in order to coerce me." He would feel flattered by what we may call the dignity of the attack upon him. But now observe how God changes his mode of working, and proceeds to use little things to humiliate Pharaoh. As he uses those who are reckoned the feeble and contemptible among men, so he uses the feeble and contemptible among the lower creation. He sends out frogs all over the land of Egypt. If only it had been an incursion of lions from the desert, roaring through the streets of the city and tearing down the people, or if it had been a host of mighty beasts trampling down his fields, then Pharaoh would have felt there was dignity in such a mode of attack;—but frogs! frogs followed by gnats, and gnats by flies! A plague to be made out of frogs seems almost too absurd to think of; and yet we see from the event that these despised little creatures forced Pharaoh to an appeal which not all the evident sablility of the first plague could extort. More curses could come out of the river than the conversion of it into blood. This plague of the frogs we may judge to have been felt as inconvenient and irritating rather than dangerous. How ridiculous it must have been to have these agile little animals, millions of them, finding their way everywhere. No place safe from them, not even the well-guarded chambers of Pharaoh himself. Here was a plague that did not wait for the people to make acquaintance with it, as when they went to the streams and pools and found them blood. It forced itself upon them by day and by night, as they sat at their meals and as they lay in their beds. The thing that is constantly inconvenient and troublesome, may bring a man to his knees sooner even than a peril which more closely concerns his life.

II. THUS WE COME TO OBSERVE PHARAOH'S FIRST SIGN OF YIELDING. Notice *that as to what will actually have power to produce a certain result, God is a far better judge than we can be.* We should have said, "put the frogs first and the blood afterwards; Pharaoh will yield to the blood what he will not yield to the frogs." But when it comes to a trial, it is quite the contrary. The frogs are so tormenting that they must be got rid of, even at a cost of a humiliating promise. Not even the success of the magicians in bringing up frogs, makes the torment more endurable; and so, perhaps somewhat to the astonishment of Moses, who might hardly expect such a sudden change, Pharaoh makes a promise in the most general terms to let the people forth for sacrifice. But mark, the moment Moses begins to *press him and fix for a day, he procrastinates.* The moment there is any relaxation of pressure upon him, he takes advantage of it. Already he begins to show that he will yield as little as he can. Give him a chance of fixing his time, and he naturally says "to-morrow." Unpleasant things are always put off until to-morrow, either on a supposition that the unpleasantness may be diminished, or on a chance that it may be escaped altogether. And then when to-morrow comes, "to-morrow" is again the cry. Notice that *Moses complies with Pharaoh's wish for this slight delay.* One day is nothing so far as Israel is concerned. They can easily wait, if only the granting of this one day will make Pharaoh's yielding more agreeable to himself. God never humiliates for the sake of humiliating. He chooses the humiliation of his enemies—as when he sends a plague of *frogs*,—because it is the most effectual means to his own ends. But the moment there is a profession of repentance, **the humiliation stops, and opportunity is given to make the profession a reality.**—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 8—15.—How long the plague of frogs endured, we are not told. Probably every effort was made, short of intentionally killing them, to get rid of them. Snakes, and chameleons, and ibises would destroy many—others would be crushed beneath wheels, trampled on by animals, squeezed to death by the opening

of doors, unintentionally killed by men. But the vacancies made were constantly filled; and there seemed no prospect of the infliction passing away. The influence of his counselors would under these circumstances be brought to bear upon the mind of the Pharaoh—he would be warned that his subjects were

attributing their sufferings to his obstinacy—he would be recommended—perhaps pressed—to yield, and would find in the annoyance which he individually endured a strong motive for compliance. Accordingly, he after a while sent for the two Israelite chiefs, and made the request recorded in the text.

Ver. 8.—Intreat the Lord—i.e., “Intreat your God, Jehovah, who has sent this plague, and can doubtless take it away.” An acknowledgment of Jehovah’s power is now for the first time forced from the reluctant king, who has hitherto boasted that “he knew not Jehovah” (ch. v. 2). I will let the people go. The royal word is passed. A positive promise is made. If the Pharaoh does not keep his word, he will outrage even Egyptian morality—he will be without excuse.

Ver. 9.—Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me. Probably a phrase of ordinary courtesy, meaning—“I submit to thy will—have the honour of my submission.” When shall I intreat? Literally “For when”—i.e., “for what date shall I make my prayer to God?” And so Pharaoh’s answer is not “To-morrow,” as in the Authorised Version, but “For to-morrow.” Thy houses. It would seem that the frogs had invaded more than one palace of the Pharaoh. He had perhaps quitted Tanis, and gone to Memphis, when the plague came; but the frogs pursued him there.

Ver. 10.—To-morrow. See the comment on ver. 9. That thou mayest know. Moses accepts the date fixed by the Pharaoh, and makes an appeal to him to recognise the *unapproachable* power and glory of Jehovah, if

the event corresponds with the time agreed upon.

Ver. 12.—Moses cried unto the Lord. The expression used is a strong one, and seems to imply special earnestness in the prayer. Moses had ventured to fix a definite time for the removal of the plague, without (so far as appears) any special command of God. Hence earnest prayer (as Kalisch notes) was doubly necessary. (Compare 1 Kings xviii. 36, 37.)

Ver. 13.—The villages. The translation “courts” or “court-yards,” is preferred by some. Houses in Egypt had generally a court-yard attached to them.

Ver. 14.—They gathered them together upon heaps. Literally “heaps upon heaps.” And the land stank. Even when the relief came, it was not entire relief. The putrefaction of the dead bodies filled the whole land with a fetid odour.

Ver. 15.—When Pharaoh saw that there was respite. Literally, “a taking of breath,” i.e., “a breathing-space.” He hardened his heart. He became hard and merciless once more, believing that the danger was past, and not expecting any fresh visitation. As Isaiah says—“Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness” (xxvi. 10). Bad men “despise the riches of God’s goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance.” In this way, they “treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. ii. 4, 5), either in this world or in the world to come. As the Lord had said. See ch. iii. 19; iv. 21; vii. 4.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 8—13.—God’s mercy when men repent ever so little. The object of the judgments, as well as of the goodness of God is “to lead men to repentance” (Rom. ii. 4). He “wouldeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). His cry is ever, “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” And sometimes His judgments have their proper effect on men, partially at any rate. Ahab repented to some extent when woe was denounced upon his house by Elijah—he “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly” (1 Kings xxi. 27). The Ninevites “repented at the preaching of Jonah”—the king “proclaimed a fast,” and “rose from his throne, and put his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and lay in ashes”—the people moreover, “put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them” (Jon. iii. 5—7). And so Pharaoh seems to have repented, in a certain sense, at this time. He abated his pride, and came down from the high position which he had assumed, sent for God’s ministers, begged their prayers, and promised compliance with the Divine commands. Probably he was not conscious to himself of insincerity. His spirit was humbled—he was convinced of the power of Jehovah—he believed in the Divine mission of Moses and Aaron—he promised, intending to perform; and God, though knowing well how short-lived his repentance would be, suffered himself to be intreated, took away His heavy hand, and gave to Pharaoh, as He gave to Ahab and to the Ninevites, “a breathing space.” We see by this, that such is the mercy of God, such His love for sinners who are not yet wholly hardened, that He

looks with favour on the slightest relenting, the least indication of a desire to turn away from sin, forsake it, and turn to righteousness. And this divine pattern must be followed by His ministers. They must not assume that any professed repentance is insincere. They may have their own private belief, as Moses doubtless had; but it is their business to welcome the first show of penitence; to come when the sinner asks their aid, to give him the benefit of their prayers, to seek to obtain for him a remission or alleviation of God's judgments. And further, they will do well to imitate the humility and courtesy of Moses. "A proud look and high stomach" on their part are unsuitable when the sinner abases himself. It is their duty, and their highest wisdom, to be "all things to all men"—to meet repentance half-way—to assist it, forward it, encourage it. No doubt, repentance under the pressure of judgment—such, *e.g.*, as sickness—is in itself suspicious and doubtful; but the wise minister will keep his doubts to himself, and bend his whole mind to the fixing, furthering, and deepening of the repentance, so that (if possible) it may issue in a real conversion of the soul to God.

Ver. 15.—*Double-minded men, unstable in all their ways.* An Egyptian king was not likely, unless exceptionally gifted by nature, to be firm, fixed, and stable in his conduct. Flattered and indulged from infancy, no sooner did he obtain the crown, than he found himself recognised as a divinity by the great mass of his subjects, and regarded as one who "could do no wrong." Occasionally, he may have been so fortunate as to fall under the influence of a wise counsellor, but in general he would have been surrounded by advisers only anxious to please by echoing to him his own wishes and ideas. This Pharaoh—whether he was Menephthah, or any one else—was evidently a weak, impulsive, double-minded monarch. He wavered between good and bad impulses, now inclining one way, now another. He was sure therefore to be unstable in his ways. Similar, though (it may be) less pronounced, instability attaches to all those whose souls are not anchored upon the firm and unchangeable basis of fixed principles. It is fatal to the consistency of a career that a man should be double-minded. No man can serve God and Mammon. There is no fellowship between light and darkness, or between Christ and Belial. A man should make his choice, and not "halt between two opinions." If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. Shifting, unstable, uncertain, variable souls earn universal contempt, and are powerless to effect anything but their own ruin.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 16—19.—THE THIRD PLAGUE. The breach of promise on the part of Pharaoh (ver. 15), was punished by the third plague, which was inflicted without being announced. It is disputed among the best critics whether the plague was really one of "lice" (as given in the Authorised Version) or of mosquitoes. To the present writer the arguments in favour of mosquitoes seem to preponderate; and he believes the *kinnim* to represent those subtle pests. Such is the view of the LXX. translators, of Philo, Artapanus, Origen, Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Geddes, Boothroyd, Keil, and Kalisch. Mosquitoes are, under ordinary circumstances, a terrible annoyance in Egypt, when the inundation is going off, especially about October. Their power to annoy is witnessed to in ancient times by Herodotus (ii. 95), Philo (*Vit. Mos.* ii. p. 97), and St. Augustine; in modern by Wilkinson and others. That Aaron was ordered to produce

them out of "the dust of the land," whereas mosquitoes come from larvæ deposited in stagnant waters (Cook), is only a proof that God can transform any kind of matter into any other. He who made man of the dust of the ground (Gen. ii. 7) could with still greater ease have transformed that dust into gnats. It is undoubtedly remarkable that the magicians could not produce the *kinnim*; but this disability does not help us to determine what exactly the *kinnim* were. Conceivably, the magicians were tired of the contest, and feeling that they would ultimately be worsted in it, withdrew before the circumstances compelled them to withdraw.

Ver. 16.—Lice. *Kinnim*—the word is only found here and in the Psalms which celebrate the Exodus (Ps. lxxviii. 46; cv. 81). It was understood as "lice" by Josephus, the Talmudical writers, Bochart, Pool, and our translators in the reign of James I. But the great

weight of authority is in favour of the rendering "gnats" or "mosquitoes." See the preceding paragraph. It must also be borne in mind that the nearest Egyptian equivalent, *khenems*, has the signification of "mosquito" (*Speaker's Commentary*, vol. i. p. 490).

Ver. 17.—*And in beast.* Kalisch notes that mosquitoes "molest especially beasts, as oxen and horses, flying into their eyes and nostrils, driving them to madness and fury, and sometimes even torturing them to death." He quotes Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.* viii. 26.

Ver. 18.—*The magicians did so with their enchantments.* The magicians stretched out their rods over certain collections of dust, but no gnats were produced; which would be the natural result, if they had made no secret arrangements. No reason can be assigned why they should not have seemed to produce gnats, as easily as frogs, if they had employed all the arts of which they were masters in so doing. But events had convinced them that they could not cope with Moses and Aaron; and it would seem that they therefore declined further contest.

Ver. 19. — The magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God. Or "of a God." It is not probable that the magicians believed in a single God, or intended in what they said to express any monotheistic idea. All that they meant to say was—"This is beyond the power of man—it is supernatural—some god must be helping the Israelites." No doubt they had come to this conclusion by a careful scrutiny of all the miracles hitherto wrought by Aaron. He hearkened not unto them. The magicians were minded to resist no longer; but Pharaoh was otherwise minded. It is quite possible that the mosquito plague did not greatly annoy him. He would probably possess lofty apartments above the height to which the mosquito ascends (*Herod.* ii. 95); or he may have guarded himself by mosquito curtains of the finest Egyptian muslin. His subjects would naturally suffer from such a plague far more than he. As the Lord had said. See the comment on the same phrase in ver. 11.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 19.—*Moral avalanches not easily arrested when once set in motion.* The magicians had begun by exciting Pharaoh to obstinate unbelief and resistance to the Divine Will. They had, by artifice or otherwise, persuaded him that there was nothing so very marvellous in the wonders wrought by Moses and Aaron, nothing that indicated a Divine author of the wonders. They had thus encouraged and stimulated him to embark upon a fatal course. Now, they would fain have stopped him, but they could not. His pride and self-conceit—his honour, as no doubt he thought it, were concerned in the struggle upon which he had entered—to give way would be to acknowledge himself worsted in a contest with two contemptible Hebrews. In vain did the magicians change their tone, and make the acknowledgment—"This is the finger of God"—their altered spirit had no effect upon him. No—whoever changed or blenched—he would persevere—his heart had become hardened—if now and then he quailed, and seemed on the verge of yielding, yet after a time he drew back—always provoking God more and more by his continual perverseness, until at last all Egypt was involved in destruction (*ch.* xii. 29, 30; *xiv.* 27–30). The magicians, who had had a large share in causing his entrance upon an evil course, found themselves unable to arrest his steps, and must be regarded as in part responsible for the final catastrophe. So nations are often urged by evil counsellors into wars or rebellions, which they soon bitterly regret; but it is too late to stop the evil. Men in business are recommended to adopt questionable means of pushing or retrieving their fortunes, and embark on courses from which their advisers would fain withdraw them; but it is impossible. Advisers should recognise the greatness of their responsibility from the first, and set themselves against the very beginning of evil, else they will find the course of affairs soon get beyond their control—they will be utterly powerless to stop the avalanche which they have set in motion.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 16—19.—*The plague of lice.* The precise nature of the visitation is matter of dispute. The word "Kinnim" seems to include various kinds of poisonous flies and insects (*Geikie*; and see *Exposition*). Some take it to denote mosquitoes. The plague stands at any rate in immediate relation to the natural troubles of the country. Travelers tell how, as the Nile waters spread over the surface of the land, and moisten its fine

dust, gnats and flies burst from their pupæ, and spring into perfect existence. They "vivify instantaneously on the dust absorbing moisture enough to discolour it. As the flood advances slowly onwards, a black line of moving insects on the extreme verge moves with it" (Osburn). There is a terrible "tick" described by Sir Samuel Baker, which lives in hot sand and dust, and preys on the blood of animals. "From the size of a grain of sand, in its natural state, it swells to the size of a hazel nut," and is "the greatest enemy to man and beast." Here, then, was a new horror, the intolerableness of the plague being increased by the insignificance of the enemy, and the hopelessness of fighting it down. Note—

I. THIS PLAGUE CAME FROM THE LAND, AS THE TWO FORMER FROM THE RIVER. Aaron "smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice (Kinnim) in man, and in beast" (ver. 17). This was a new blow at Egyptian idolatry, the earth being worshipped as well as the river. The suddenness, extent, and fearfully aggravated character of the plague, and its appearance in immediate connection with Aaron's act in smiting the earth, proved it to be of supernatural origin, while cognate with the phenomena of the country. 1. At the stroke of God's anger, trouble may be made to break forth upon us from any quarter of our existence. Now, the river; again, the dust. The quarter it comes from is not likely to be that from which we are expecting it. 2. Troubles spring not from the dust (Job v. 6); but they may be made to rise so thickly around us that it may almost seem as if they did spring from it. 3. The most insignificant agencies (and circumstances) may be made the means of severe retribution. It is intensely painful to be made to suffer through things which we despise. 4. God's retributions are often such as strike home to our tenderest points. The Egyptians—especially the priestly classes—were extremely cleanly, and this plague, if it was one of vermin, must have been a grievous infliction to them.

II. THE THIRD PLAGUE CAME UNANNOUNCED. We forfeit our claim to warnings by acting presumptuously (Prov. xxix. 1).

III. IT LED THE MAGICIANS TO GIVE UP THE CONTEST (ver. 19). We find them still standing before Pharaoh (ch. ix. 11), but from this point we hear of no more attempts at imitation. They may have abandoned the contest—1. From a *sense of shame*. The paltriness of their attempts at imitating the miracles of Moses and Aaron was so apparent, that the magicians must almost have blushed at them. They would rather give up the attempt than expose themselves to more humiliations. 2. From *astonishment*. As experts in magical arts, they knew very well the difference between false miracles and real ones. They are confounded to find men who can work wonders of so stupendous a character, and this, manifestly, by the real assistance of Deity. 3. From *fear and pain*. They had no interest in courting a continuance of these terrible plagues, which they recognised as true works of God. They were as painful to them as to others, and they dreaded the consequences of perseverance in so unequal a conflict. We see from this (1) That involuntary testimony to the truth is often extracted from those whose inclinations would lead them to oppose it. There are remarkable examples in the life of Christ, e.g. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him," etc. (John xi. 47, 48); and in the lives of the Apostles, e.g. Acts iv. 16; xvi. 17. The confessions of the demons in Christ's history are of the same order. Many testimonies of an extraordinary kind have come from unbelievers. (2) That there are great differences in degree of moral hardihood. Pharaoh held out, but the magicians gave in. They were not converted to the truth, in the sense of becoming servants of Jehovah, but they thought it prudent not to go further in open opposition. Even this degree of submission saved them from being hardened as Pharaoh was subsequently.

IV. THE PLAGUE HAD NO GOOD EFFECT ON PHARAOH (ver. 19). In itself, it was as likely to have produced submission as the previous one, and Pharaoh had now, in addition, the testimony of his own magicians to the reality of the wonder. But to place against this, there was the fact that he had already submitted, and had broken his promise. It was doubly hard to submit again, and stronger means would be required to bring him to the point of a second entreaty. Thus do the influences that work for our good gradually lose their power over us, because so frequently resisted. Every time a vow is made and broken, a good resolution formed, and not kept, it is rendered harder to repeat the act—J. O.

Vers. 16—19.—*The third plague—the gnats: the finger of God.* I. CONSIDER THE PLAGUE ITSELF. From the water God comes to the land. He who has power over every drop of water has power over every grain of dust. Everywhere at his touch the inorganic becomes the organic. And he still keeps in the same line of action which has been begun with the frogs. He produces small creatures in immense numbers, rather than larger creatures in fewer numbers; that thus he may the more irritate and humiliate Pharaoh. *Individually*, the gnats are nothing; their delicate little bodies may be crushed out of existence between thumb and finger. *Collectively*, they amount to the dimensions of a plague.

II. CONSIDER THE VERDICT OF THE MAGICIANS UPON THIS PLAGUE. The noticeable thing in the plague of the gnats is not so much the new agents of chastisement as the discomfiture of the magicians. Not that they had been really successful before. On any view of their proceedings they were deceivers, for what they did was done either by trickery or by the power of God working through them; whereas they took it all to their own credit and the credit of Egypt's deities. This was not success. No man can be called successful when he has the daily fear that his resources are coming to an end. Much that is reckoned success is only failure after all, ingeniously and impudently delayed. *The verdict of the magicians was worthless so far as it seemed to indicate the real state of affairs.* They say, "This is the finger of God," but we see only too clearly the motive of their admission. When an admission is extorted, as theirs was, it is deprived of all virtue and grace. That the magicians talked of the finger of God was no proof that the finger of God was present. They talked thus because they had no other way of cloaking their own shame, and accounting for their failure. The finger of God was not more evident in the gnats than in the frogs or in the bloody streams, or in the converted rod. He who could really see the finger of God in one of these, could see it in all the rest. That finger had been pointing all the time just as it pointed now. It was a question of hand rather than finger; and the hand was certainly pressing more heavily. Still, though the magicians took up this way of speaking merely for excuse, *we have to thank them for an expressive and appropriate phrase.* They, in their blind selfishness, speak of the finger of God, not knowing all they say; but the finger of God is a great and helpful reality to those who will look for it and be guided by it. It should ever be our business to look for this great finger. In a world of weathercocks, blown about with changing and conflicting opinions, that finger ever points in one direction; and yet while it teaches us to maintain a rigorous adhesion to Christian principles, teaches us at the same time to maintain them in a spirit of wise expediency. He has no true eye for the finger of God who knows not when to bend that he may not break. Pharaoh would not recognise the finger even when his own magicians were compelled to make a show of recognition. When they were defeated he seemed to think they were no longer of any account among his advisers. Thus we have to notice again what poor judges we are of the relative severity of the plagues. Pharaoh was more affected by the frogs than by the gnats. Perhaps he was so disgusted with the failure of the magicians as to be filled with a more rebellious spirit than ever. They said they saw the finger of God; he stubbornly refused to see it. *Whether a man will really see this finger depends on what he is looking for.* Equally pernicious is it to see Divine power where it is not, and to fail in seeing it where it is.—Y.

Vers. 16—19.—I. THERE IS A LIMIT TO THE DIVINE MERCY. This, like every third plague, came without warning. Opportunity was given twice to avert coming judgment. None is given now. Unannounced it startles them in the midst of their fancied security. 1. When men have baffled the servants of God by unrepentant stubbornness and broken vows the matter is not ended. God who has spoken will also act. 2. God will not always strive. Those who resist mercy pass on to meet sudden destruction.

II. THE JUDGMENT UPON THE IDOLATRY OF EGYPT. In the two first plagues God's hand was laid upon the river which the Egyptians worshipped as the giver of life. In this it was laid upon the land—also an Egyptian god and the giver of their food, etc. God proves that these are his servants, and that they will bless or harm according to his word. The works of God's hands—earth, sea, etc.—are still regarded as bestowing good independently of his will. Let us not need Egypt's chastisements to teach us that all are serving him, both in blessing and in judgment.

III. THE WORLD'S WISDOM TURNED INTO FOOLISHNESS. They who have hitherto contended so proudly with God are confounded before the basest of all the miracles. 1. The wisdom that seeks to rob man's heart of God is brought to nothing before the gospel. With all its vaunted power it could not bring peace to a sinner's heart nor change to his life. 2. Atheistic science, that can see God nowhere, will yet be confounded before his judgments.—U.

EXPOSITION.

THE FOURTH PLAGUE. Vers. 20—24.—It has been noticed that—setting apart the last and most terrible of the plagues, which stands as it were by itself—the remainder divide themselves into three groups of three each—two in each group coming with a warning, and the third without. (See ch. viii. 16; ix. 8; x. 21.) In other respects, no great regularity is observable. There is a general principle of increasing severity in the afflictions, but it does not obtain throughout the entire series. The first three caused annoyance, rather than actual injury, either to persons or property. Of the next three, two were upon property, one upon both property and person (ch. ix. 10). Of the remaining three, two again inflicted injury on property, while one (the plague of darkness) was a mere personal annoyance. The exact character of the fourth plague depends on the proper translation of the word *'arôb*. The Jewish commentators connected this word with *'Ereb* and *'Arab*, words meaning “mingled” or “mixed;” and supposed a mixed multitude of animals—beasts, reptiles, and insects—to be meant. But the expression used throughout, which is *ha-'arôb*, “the *'arôb*,” marks very clearly a single definite species. So much was clear to the LXX., who rendered the word by *κυρβία*, “the dog-fly,” which is not the common house-fly (*Musca domestica*), but a distinct species (*Musca canina*). Flies of this kind are said to constitute a terrible affliction in Egypt (Philo, *De vit. Mos.* ii. p. 101; Munk, *Palestine*, p. 120; etc.); but they attack men chiefly, and do no harm to houses or to the fruits of the field, whereas the *'arôb* is spoken of as a pest in the houses, and as “destroying the land” (verse 21). It has been, therefore, suggested that the *Blatta orientalis*, or cockroach, a kind of beetle, is really intended. These creatures suddenly appear upon the Nile in great numbers; they “inflict very painful bites with their jaws; gnaw and destroy clothes, household furniture, leather, and articles of every kind, and either consume or render unavailable all eatables” (Kalisch).

They sometimes drive persons out of their houses; and they also devastate the fields.

Ver. 20.—**Lo, he cometh forth to the water.** See ch. vii. 15, and comment. It is suspected that on this occasion Pharaoh “went to the Nile with a procession to open the solemn festival” held in the autumn when the inundation was beginning to abate (Cook). **Say unto him.** Repeat, i.e., the Divine command so often given (ch. v. 1; vii. 16; viii. 1).

Ver. 21.—**Swarms of flies** is an unfortunate translation of a single substantive in the singular number, accompanied by the article. A mixture, etc., is nearly as bad. The writer must mean some one definite species of animal, which he called “the *'arôb*.” On the probable identification of the animal, see the Introductory paragraph to this Chapter. **And also the ground.** The *'arôb*, like the frogs, was to plague them both inside their houses and outside, but especially inside.

Ver. 22.—**I will sever in that day the land of Goshen.** On the position of the land of Goshen, see the Excursus on the Geography. The “severance” is a new feature, and one distinguishing the later from the earlier plagues. It was an additional mark of the miraculous character of the visitations, well calculated to impress all thoughtful and honest minds. By all such it would be seen that the God who could make this severance was no local God of the Hebrews only, but one whose power extended over the whole earth.

Ver. 23.—**A division.** Literally “a redemption,” i.e., a sign that they are redeemed from bondage, and are “My people,” not thine any longer. **To-morrow.** Particulars of time and place are fixed beforehand, to mark clearly that the visitation does not take place by chance, or by mere natural law, but by God's positive decree and by his agency.

Ver. 24.—**A grievous swarm of flies.** Rather “a multitude of beetles.” As with the frogs, so with the beetles, it aggravated the infliction, that, being sacred animals, they might not be destroyed or injured. Beetles were sacred to Ra, the sun-god; and one form of Ra, Chepra, was ordinarily represented under the form of a beetle, or as a man with a beetle for his head. **The land was corrupted.** Rather “destroyed;” i.e., grievously injured, or “devastated” (as Kalisch renders). **The beetles seriously damaged the growing crops.**

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22, 23.—*God puts division between the good and bad, both here and hereafter.*—In some respects the good and the bad appear to be treated alike in this life, and no difference to be made between them. "God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). The Preacher's experience was that "all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath" (Eccles. ix. 2). If God sends a pestilence upon a land, or a drought, or an excess of rain, or any other calamity, the good and the bad seem to suffer equally; no difference to be put between them. This is the first impression of the contemplative philosopher when he looks upon human life; and it is a true impression to a great extent. But there are limitations, which, though easily overlooked at the first glance, become apparent upon more careful examination. God does not treat all nations alike—he favours those which observe his laws; punishes those who disobey them. He seems sometimes especially to bless certain faithful families, as that of David, and to rain plagues upon others, as those of Saul, Herod the Great, and Napoleon. He gives, on the whole, to good men certain temporal advantages over bad men, as those which flow naturally (*i.e.* by his appointment) from industry, honesty, prudence, sobriety, and other virtues. The result is that "godliness" is said in Scripture to "have the promise of this life" (1 Tim. iv. 8). And if we take into consideration the satisfaction of a good conscience, the confidence towards God, the calm trust, and the certain hope which sustain the good, and set in the opposite scale the doubts and fears and horrors of an evil conscience which afflict the bad, we shall have little doubt that the balance of happiness, even in this life, is with the servants of God. Still, no doubt the *great* "division" is put hereafter. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats—and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. xxv. 31—3). Awful the separation, where between the two "there is a great gulf fixed" (Luke xvi. 26)—on the one side heavenly joy and perfect felicity—on the other, "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 20—32.—*The plague of flies.* This torment is thought by many to have embraced winged pests of all kinds. In this case, it would include the mosquito, cattle-fly, beetles, dog-flies, and numbers of others. But see the exposition. We have to note regarding it—

I. PHARAOH FINDS AS BEFORE THAT THERE IS NO ESCAPING FROM THE HANDS OF GOD. He is met at the brink of the river, and confronted with the old alternative—"Let my people go . . . else," etc. (vers. 20, 21). The king, when he saw Moses, would have no difficulty in anticipating what was coming. The bitter greeting he would give him would be akin to that of Ahab to Elijah—"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" (1 Kings xxi. 20); nor would Moses' reply be very different from that given by the prophet—"I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." What madness in the king to keep up this foolish, this suicidal contest! But the conflict of every sinner with Jehovah is of the same infatuated character. Stroke after stroke descends, yet impenitence is persevered in. Well may God say, "Why should ye be stricken any more?" (Is. i. 5.) His demand, through all, abides unchanged.

II. THE FOURTH PLAGUE SPRINGS FROM THE AIR. The sphere of judgment is widening and extending, taking in constantly new regions—water, earth, air. The voices that summon to repentance are heard from every side. A new demonstration of the universality of Jehovah's rule—of the unlimited sweep of his dominion (ver. 22). Flies are agents which God can employ as a scourge of nations still. We read of singular feats in the way of insect-taming: of flies, bees, and even lice being trained to

obey orders, and go through wonderful evolutions. Man's power of control over these minute creatures is but a feeble image of the power exercised over them by God. He enrols them among his battalions, and uses them to execute his commissions.

III. A NEW SIGN IS THIS TIME GIVEN—THE SEVERANCE OF THE LAND OF GOSHEN FROM THE REST OF EGYPT (vers. 22; 23). The Israelites had probably been made fellow-sufferers with the Egyptians, at least in part, in the inconvenience experienced from the first three plagues. This was permitted, at once as a chastisement for their unbelief and murmurings, and as a purifying discipline. Nothing has been said as to the effect produced upon their minds by the outbreak of these terrific plagues; but they must have shown the Israelites the folly of their recent conduct, and wrought them up to a high pitch of expectation in the confidence that the day of their redemption was drawing near. With the production of this change of mind in the dwellers in Goshen, the need for further inflictions upon *them* ceased, and a difference was thereafter put between them and the Egyptians. This astonishing separation was as clear a proof as could have been given of Jehovah's absoluteness in the government of the creatures, of the extent of his rule, and of the care he exercised over his chosen people. Possibly, Pharaoh had hitherto been taking encouragement from the fact that Israel was involved in the calamities. He may have been led to question: 1. God's *power*, seeing that he could not protect his own worshippers. It may have suggested itself to him that Jehovah's power was *limited*, and therefore might successfully be braved. 2. God's *love* for Israel. For if he loved them so much, why did he allow them to suffer? And if his interest in them was as weak as facts seemed to show, it was not impossible, if resistance was continued, that he might abandon them altogether. 3. The *likelihood of God's proceeding to extremities*. God, Pharaoh may have thought, must stop somewhere, else his own people will be destroyed together with mine. The need of protecting *them* is a safeguard against his proceeding to extremes with *me*. The severance now effected between Goshen and the rest of Egypt was a cruel blow to all such hopes. Thenceforward it was plain that God *did* care for Israel, that his *power* was as great as his *love*, and that whatever happened to Egypt, Israel was as safe as the pavilion of the Divine protection could make it. The fact is not without significance to ourselves. It teaches us that a deep and broad line of demarcation is really being put in God's thoughts between his own people and the rest of mankind, and that, whatever be the nature of his *outward* providence, he has their interests and well-being continually at heart. Those who encourage themselves in sin because they see that the righteous suffer with the wicked, and judge that this proves an absence of interest or care on the part of God, must submit to a great undeceiving. The last judgment will make a final separation (Matt. xxv. 31—35).

IV. THE FOURTH PLAGUE BROUGHT PHARAOH A SECOND TIME TO THE POINT OF SUBMISSION TO GOD'S COMMANDS. The separation of the territory of Israel seems greatly to have startled him, and he sent anew for Moses. The unwillingness of his mind to grant the required consent to the departure of the people is apparent from the interview. 1. *Pharaoh proposes a compromise* (v. 25). This is a common expedient with those who are hard pushed with questions of religion. It is, however, only a veil for the spirit of disobedience working underneath. The compromise proposed was unhesitatingly rejected by Moses. He had no authority to accept it. It was in its own nature an untenable one (ver. 26). Nothing was to be gained by accepting it. By standing firm to his demand, he was certain to get the *whole* of what he wanted (ver. 28), why then take a part? Had he accepted the compromise, it would probably only have emboldened Pharaoh to further resistance. God's servants will do well to imitate Moses in this distrust of compromises. Little good ever comes of them. Principle, not expediency, should rule the Christian's conduct. The intrusion of expediency into matters ecclesiastical has been a grievous source of weakness, of scandal, and of loss of spiritual power. 2. *He ultimately yields*. He concedes the whole demand; qualified only by the injunction not to go far away (ver. 28). The interview leaves on one's mind the impression of sincerity—of a real relenting, of however short a duration, on the part of Pharaoh. Just so much the more fatal to his spiritual life was the subsequent hardening.

V. THOUGH WARNED BY MOSES OF THE PERIL OF ACTING DECETFULLY, PHARAOH A NEW HARDENED HIS HEART (ver. 32). Hardening, after the experience just described, may be regarded as almost settling Pharaoh's doom. He would soon be, if he

was not already, irrecoverable. God had trusted him a second time, and this was the result. Obstinacy was passing into obduracy.—J. O.

Vers. 20—32.—*The fourth plague—the flies: the immunities of Goshen.* The mere change from one chastising agent to another is not a matter to be dwelt on in considering this plague. We note that God makes the change from gnats to flies, and that Pharaoh, who was obdurate before the gnats, is so far affected before the flies as to make an offer of submission; but it is obviously impossible for us to see why the flies should be more efficacious than the gnats. The important thing is, not the gradation from gnats to flies, but the way in which Goshen was protected by Jehovah, and thereby proclaimed as under his favour. As in the third plague we are to notice the discomfiture of the magicians, rather than the gnats themselves, so in the fourth plague we are to notice the immunities that were secured to Goshen, rather than the flies. Thus we mark how majestically and how worthily of himself Jehovah moves on from point to point towards the climax of his visitations on Pharaoh. To say that these plagues increased in severity is not to say much. Their succession in this respect is not so traceable as the succession of the events which happened in connection with them. In considering these events in their succession, we see more clearly how far this narrative of the plagues is from being the construction of a mere story-teller. There is a certain Divine art as to what is inserted and what omitted; but of this we may be sure, that nothing is invented. Underneath the condensed and pregnant record there is a tremendous and bitter reality. Consider then—

I. **THIS PROTECTION OF GOSHEN.** 1. *Note what this protection did for the Israelites.* Had they then up to this time been sharers in the inconveniences and perils of the first three plagues? We must conclude that they had been; and that Jehovah only now deemed it fitting to extend special exemption to them. It was well for them to share somewhat of the sufferings of the Egyptians. (And we must bear in mind that however much they shared of these sufferings, yet afterwards, in the wilderness, the recollection of the comforts and delicacies of Egypt rose above all the recollection of the sufferings. Ch. xvi. 3; Num. xi. 4—6.) But now, with the fourth plague, the time has come to make a perceptible difference between Israelite and Egyptian. True, the contest is advancing, but there is still much to be done; and it is well to give Israel timely encouragements. They must wait a while to be liberated from Pharaoh's thralldom, yet surely it must rejoice and comfort their hearts to see themselves, even though in bondage, free from the afflictions which are coming ever more thickly upon Egypt. Though they have not all they want, it is something to have such a clear sign that God has marked them for his own. Even in this world, with all his sufferings, temporal disadvantages, and opportunities of gain missed, because he is a Christian, the Christian has that which makes the world to envy and to fear. For a while we must share in the world's sufferings, but the world cannot share in our joys. Israel has to suffer with Pharaoh in the beginning, but presently it escapes; whereas Pharaoh cannot by any plan extend Goshen among the habitations of his own people. If we would have the comforts of Goshen we must go there, fraternise with them that dwell there, and join ourselves on to them. 2. *Note what this protection may have done for the Egyptians.* It may have done much in the way of revelation as to the cause of their troubles. Up to this point, most of them, even while they experienced great sufferings, had no knowledge of what caused the sufferings. It is very improbable that the demands of Moses had become known to the great bulk of the people. To national troubles they were doubtless used at times—such troubles as had come to their ancestors in the seven years of famine—but these plagues were altogether beyond precedent, and must have provoked much active enquiry as to what possible cause could produce them. And now when this sharp division is made between Egypt and Goshen, this line evidently not of man's making, the Egyptian people cannot but feel at once that there must be some connection between their sufferings and the state of the Israelites. Hence—3. It is possible that *here we have the real reason why Pharaoh is now driven again into a sort of submission.* What if he were more concerned at the absence of the flies from Goshen than at the presence of them among his own people! Might not this extraordinary exemption set his own people thinking too much, and cause his house to be divided against itself?

II. **HIS PROPOSITIONS TO MOSES OF COMPROMISE.** Pharaoh, on the occasion of his former

yielding (ver. 10), proposed to let the people go "*to-morrow*." Now he varies the terms of compromise. The people shall offer their sacrifices *in the land*. This offer he seems to have made in complete ignorance of the difficulties which lay in the way from the feelings of his own people. A fine man this, to be the ruler of a great kingdom! One who had to be taught the feelings of his own people by a stranger. Like most despots, he did not understand how vain it was to contend against the strength of custom and popular sentiment, particularly in matters of religion. Not only were the rites of Israelitish worship different from those of Egyptian worship, but one of the animals most frequently used for Israelitish sacrifice, would if so used before the Egyptians, have been viewed by them with the utmost repugnance. It was no visionary peril which Moses indicated. Whately, in his annotated edition of Bacon's Essays (p. 126), speaking on this very subject of the strength of popular custom, illustrates it, curiously enough, from the conduct of the Alexandrian populace at a much later time. "When the Romans took possession of Egypt, the people submitted without the least resistance to have their *lives and property* at the mercy of a foreign nation: but one of the Roman soldiers happening to kill a cat in the streets of Alexandria, they rose on him and tore him limb from limb, and the excitement was so violent, that the generals overlooked the outrage for fear of insurrection."—In the land of Egypt then, says Moses, the sacrifices of Israel cannot be; and of course beyond the sufficient reason stated by Moses, there were others which there was no need to state, and which Pharaoh could not have understood, even if they had been stated.—But Pharaoh is driven from one proviso only to seek refuge in another. *If the people go out, they are not to go very far*. And yet this offer, conditional as it seemed, was not conditional in reality. It was enough to serve the purpose of Moses, and he could readily accept it. Once a bird is outside of the cage, a very few minutes will take it clear away from the risk of re-capture. If Pharaoh only lets Israel out of his hands, it matters not how far, the rest will settle itself. This promise was enough to justify Moses, in interceding for a withdrawal of the heavy hand of Jehovah; and Jehovah, in granting the request. Thus a second time was Pharaoh taken at his word. God, we see, takes men at their word *when they make right resolutions*. If they make wrong, selfish resolutions, he would have them alter them. But once they have resolved rightly, he holds them to the resolution, and gives opportunity to carry it out. God withdrew the flies, as he had withdrawn the frogs. There seems even something as miraculous about the withdrawal as about the original infliction. It might have been expected that a few of the flies would remain, just one here and there, but *there remained not one*. Lastly, notice what is now coming to be the *regular result of Pharaoh's temporary yieldings*. He gives way a little to pressure, but as soon as the pressure is removed, he returns to his original position. All these yieldings of his are but as the slight appearance of thaw when the sun is at his best on a keen winter's day. Pharaoh was thawed just a little on the surface of his nature. As soon as the heat of the present plague departed, the frost in his proud heart set in with more severity than ever.—Y.

Vers. 20—32.—*The Fourth Plague*.—I. THE SUPERSTITION OF EGYPT IS MADE ITS SCOURGE. 1. The land was covered with the sacred beetle. It swarmed upon the ground and in their homes. No movement was possible without crushing or treading under foot the insect they adored. When God overthrows idolatries the very reverence with which the idols have been regarded deepens the chastisement. When the covetous sink under the loss of wealth, they themselves have given its weight to the blow which crushes them. 2. The land was destroyed by it. No prayer or propitiation served to avert the judgment. A land is ever corrupted by its idolatry. With the knowledge and worship of the true God, purity and righteousness and truth are put far from it. The soul is marred and wasted by covetousness.

II. THE SEPARATION BETWEEN GOSHEN AND EGYPT. 1. Hitherto there had been no separation. Up to a certain point the just and the unjust suffer in common. 2. Beyond this, God shields his loved ones. They are alike visited by sorrow, &c.; but while there is darkness and the ministration of death in the abodes of the unrepentant, there is light and the ministration of life in the dwellings of the righteous.

III. THE REJECTED COMPROMISE. Nothing less than God's demand can be accepted. If we are to go free and to obtain the inheritance, we must make no compromise

with the world or with sin; we must offer to God the full unfettered worship he demands. There must be full and complete separation between Egypt and Israel, the Church and the world, else it will be impossible to present before God the sacrifices he asks for. A Church unseparated from the world will be a worldly Church.

IV. PHARAOH'S BROKEN FAITH. We have no reason to doubt that he was sincere when he made the promise (ver. 28). How many vows sincerely made in trouble are forgotten in the ease they sought to purchase! Under the pressure of affliction men are ready to sacrifice much to which, when God's hand is removed, they cling as to their life.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 25—32.—The fourth plague moves the Pharaoh more than any preceding one. He still cannot bring himself to grant the demand of Moses; but he offers a compromise. The Israelites shall have a respite from their toils, and be permitted to hold their festival, and offer the needful sacrifices in Egypt (ver. 25). When this offer is for good reasons not accepted, he yields even further—he will let the people go and sacrifice in the wilderness—only they must not “go far away” (ver. 28). Having made this promise, he obtains for the second time the intercession of Moses and the discontinuance of the plague in consequence of it. But then, as before, when he saw that there was respite (ver. 15), he retracted his promise, hardened himself, and refused to allow the people to quit Egypt (ver. 32).

Ver. 25.—In the land—i.e., in Egypt within the limits of my dominions, so that I may not lose sight of you—far less run the risk of losing you altogether.

Ver. 26.—It is not meet so to do. So many animals were held sacred by the Egyptians, some universally, some partially, that, if they held a great festival anywhere in Egypt, the Israelites could not avoid offending the religious feelings of their neighbours. Some animals would be sure to be sacrificed—white cows, or heifers, for instance—by some of the people, which the Egyptians regarded it as sacrilegious to put to death. A bloody conflict, or even a civil war, might be the consequence. By the abomination of the Egyptians seems to be meant animals of which the Egyptians would abominate the killing. It has generally been supposed that either cows alone, or “cows, bulls and oxen” are meant; but recent researches seem to show that it was only white cows which it was absolutely unlawful to sacrifice. (See ‘Records of the Past,’ vol. ii. pp. 90, 96, 99; vol. x. pp. 44, 62, etc.) Will they not stone us? Death was the legal penalty for wilfully killing any sacred animal

in Egypt (Herod. ii. 65). On one occasion even a Roman ambassador was put to death for accidentally killing a cat (Diod. Sic. i. 83). Stoning does not appear to have been a legal punishment in Egypt, so that we must suppose Moses to have feared the people present taking the law into their own hands, seizing the sacrificers, and killing them by this ready method.

Ver. 27.—Three days’ journey into the wilderness. This was the demand made from the first (ch. v. 3) by Divine direction (ch. iii. 18). Its object was to secure the absence of Egyptians as witnesses. As he shall command us. Compare ch. x. 26. where Moses observes—“We know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither.” Divine directions were expected as to the number and the selection of the victims.

Ver. 28.—Only ye shall not go very far away. Here for the first time Pharaoh shows his real objection to letting the Israelites go—he is afraid that they will escape him. So he suggests the compromise, that they shall just enter the wilderness on his eastern border, remaining near the frontier, and therefore within his reach. Moses seems to have made no objection to this proviso. As Kalisch says, “he committed himself entirely to the guidance and direction of God.” The three days’ journey which he had requested by Divine command (ch. iii. 18) would not take him far beyond the Egyptian frontier. Entreat for me. Compare ver. 8. An abbreviated form is now used, as sufficiently intelligible.

Ver. 29.—To-morrow. As Pharaoh had fixed the “morrow” for the departure of the second plague (ver. 10), so Moses now announces a similar date for the departure of the fourth. He adds a remonstrance against any further deceit or tergiversation, which Pharaoh must have felt to be well deserved.

Ver. 31.—There remained not one. The hand of God was shewn in the removal no less than in the infliction of the plagues. The complete disappearance was as abnormal as the sudden coming.

Ver. 32.—At this time also. Compare ch. vii. 13, 22; ch. viii. 15.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 25, 26.—*Compromise not allowable in religious matters.* The struggles of political and social life, the conflicting claims of races, nations, states, classes, parties, are usually terminated, and perhaps, under the existing condition of things, are best terminated, by compromise. Let neither side get all it wants—let both yield something to the other—let the prudent and the moderate on each side seek an intermediate course between the two extremes advocated—and the result is often peace and something approaching to contentment. Compromise is the soul of diplomacy—the idol of clever Parliamentary leaders and party managers—the oil, as has been said, whereby the wheels of the world are made to run smoothly. But in religion, compromise is out of place. (1) There must be no compromise on any question of morality. If a thing is wrong, it must be got rid of, not tolerated under certain restrictions; e.g., slavery, prostitution, vivisection, intemperance. A compromise between vice and virtue is an insult to virtue. (2) There must be no compromise with respect to doctrine. Doctrine is either false or true; and between truth and falsity there is no half-way house. Half a truth is a lie. To compromise the truth, is to give place to a lie. (3) There must be no compromise with respect to any Christian duty. The laws of God are plain and must be obeyed. Not to obey them is to disobey them. Moses was ordered to lead his people out of Egypt. To have accepted Pharaoh's offer would have been a flagrant breach of the command given to him. It was not necessary for him to see any ill consequences, in order that he should feel bound to reject it. Ill consequences—even could none have been foreseen—would have been sure to follow. For he would have forfeited God's blessing—he would have entered on the path of disobedience—to curry favour with an earthly monarch he would have offended against the King of Heaven.

Vers. 29.—*The duty of God's servants to rebuke the great of the earth.* "Let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more." Deceit is despicable in the meanest of men. How much more in a king! Subterfuge, tricks, lies, are said to be the refuge of the weak, the only resource whereby they can meet and defend themselves against the violence and oppressiveness of the strong. What need has a king of them? A king drags his honour in the dust when he forfeits his word, and does more to lower the dignity of kings in general than fifty rebels or revolutionists. Our own "King Charles the Martyr" has lost half the sympathy which he would otherwise have obtained, by his lamentable want of straightforwardness and steadfastness. And when kings err, in this or any other way, it is the duty of those who have the opportunity, to rebuke them. Elijah rebuked Ahab; Azariah, son of Oded, rebuked Asa; Eliezer, Jehoshaphat; Azariah the high priest, Uzziah; John Baptist, Herod Antipas. Jesus himself spoke of Herod as "that fox." The great are very apt to urge that whoever says a word in their dispraise is "speaking evil of dignities" (Jude 8), and so offending against the law of God. But the examples cited show that "dignities" have no claim to exemption from the rebukes and reproofs of God's servants. Dignities ought to be above needing rebuke. They ought to set an example of virtue and highmindedness, and, above all, of regard for their word, when once they have pledged it. What might be forgiven in inferior men, cannot be pardoned in them. "Be wise, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth." "A city set on a hill cannot be hid."

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIFTH PLAGUE. VRS. 1—7.—Hitherto the plagues had been directed rather against the persons of the Egyptians than against their property. Property had perhaps suffered somewhat in the preceding plague, if it was really one of the *Blatta orientalis*; but other-

wise the various afflictions had caused nothing but pain and annoyance to the person. Now this was to be changed. Property was to be made to suffer. It remained to be seen whether the Pharaoh would be impressed more deeply by calamities which impoverished his subjects than by those which merely caused their personal annoyance and suffering. The

hand of God was first laid upon the cattle, or rather upon the domesticated animals in general (ver. 3). These were made to suffer from a "murrain" or epidemic pestilence, which carried off vast numbers. Such visitations are not uncommon in Egypt, and generally fall with especial force on the Delta, where the existing Pharaoh and the Hebrew people resided. The miraculous character of the visitation at this time was indicated, 1. By its announcement, and appearance on the day appointed (vers. 3—6); 2. By its severity (ver. 6); and 3. By its attacking the Egyptian cattle only (ver. 7). Pharaoh seems, however, to have been almost less moved by this plague than by any other.

Ver. 1.—Excepting in the designation of Jehovah as "the Lord God of the Hebrews," this verse is an almost exact repetition of the first verse of ch. viii. Such repetitions are very characteristic of the most ancient writings.

Ver. 3.—Thy cattle which is in the field. The word "cattle" here is to be taken generally, as including under it the various kinds particularised. The cattle are mentioned as being at this time "in the field," because during the inundation all of them were brought in and housed, while, after the waters had retired, and the land had dried, most of them were turned out to graze. This is always the time at which epidemics break out. The horses, the asses, etc. Horses, which had been unknown prior to the Hyksos invasion, and which consequently do not appear in the list of animals presented to Abraham (Gen. xii. 16), first became common under the eighteenth dynasty, when they seem to have been employed exclusively in war. Their use for agricultural purposes, which is perhaps here indicated, was not till later. (See Chabas, *Études sur l'Antiquité Historique*, p.

421.) The ass was employed in great numbers at all times in Egypt. Women and children rode on them, men sometimes in a sort of litter between two of them. They were chiefly used for carrying burthens, which were sometimes of enormous size (Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, Part ii. pls. 42a, 47, 56, 80c, etc.). The camels are not represented on any Egyptian monument; but they are occasionally mentioned in the inscriptions (Chabas, *Études*, pp. 400—13). They are called *kauri* or *kamaru*. There is no doubt of their employment by the Egyptians as beasts of burthen in the traffic with Syria and with the Sinaitic peninsula.

Ver. 4.—The Lord shall sever. Compare ch. viii. 22. There shall nothing die, etc. The original is more emphatic, and might be rendered literally—"There shall not die of all that is the children's of Israel a thing."

Ver. 5.—To-morrow. God may have interposed the interval in order that such as believed the announcement might save their animals by bringing them in out of the fields. All the cattle died—i.e. all that were "in the field" (ver. 3).

Ver. 7.—And Pharaoh sent. This time the king had the curiosity to send out and see whether the Israelites had been spared. Though he found the fact correspond to the announcement, he was not seriously impressed. Perhaps he thought the Israelites took better care of their cattle and were better cattle doctors than his own people. (The doctoring of cattle is represented on the monuments. Rosellini, *Mon. Civ.* pl. 31.) Or he may have attributed the escape of their animals to the more healthy air of Goshen. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. The plague affected him less than others had done, rather than more. He was so rich that an affliction which touched nothing but property seemed a trivial matter. What cared he for the sufferings of the poor beasts, or the ruin of those who depended upon the breeding and feeding of cattle?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The burthen of man's sin presses on the brute creation, as well as on man himself.* "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 22). Brutes are to a large extent co-partners with man in his sorrows and his wretchedness. But brute suffering is the product of man's sin. Mostly it is directly caused by man. Man not only kills animals for his food, but he chases them for his diversion, mutilates them for his convenience, vivisects them for his supposed benefit. In chasing them, he wounds more than he kills; in mutilating them, he often removes parts necessary for their comfort; in vivisectioning them, he knowingly makes them suffer excruciating pain. His use of them as beasts of draught and burden is a lighter form of evil than any of these; but in the aggregate it causes, perhaps, as much suffering. Again, man makes the horse his companion in war, and exposes him to the most hideous wounds, the most horrid deaths. Nor does the list of his misdoings as respects the animal world end here. To children the wanton torture of insects seems to be a chief delight. For the production of certain

delicacies of the table, turkeys and other animals are made to undergo untold agonies. Slow death is inflicted on calves, to make the veal white. Finally, animals are often involved in the Divine judgments by which nations are visited for their sins. "Much cattle" would have perished miserably, if Nineveh had not repented at Jonah's preaching. The beasts endure as much as the men when cities are blockaded. Occasionally, as in this plague, the beasts themselves are the direct sufferers, and God punishes man through them. No doubt there is a mystery in this. The suffering of innocent dumb animals is hard to reconcile with the goodness of God. His causing pain to them for man's fault is even more strange. How persons who have a fixed belief that the brute creation enjoys no future life, overcome the difficulty, we know not. But the solution of it may, we think, be found in the Scripture which tells of "the spirit of the beast which goeth downward" (Eccles. iii. 21). If the spirit of a beast survives, it may find compensation in another life for what it has suffered here. Man's coldness and deadness with respect to animal suffering is as marvellous as anything in his nature and history. "Pharaoh's heart" was utterly hard to it. He did not even ask that the plague should be removed. The sufferings and miserable death of thousands of beasts made not the slightest impression upon him. Probably he did not give their sufferings a thought. And even among Christians, is it not much the same? How few protest against even such enormities as promiscuous vivisection! How few, in grieving over the horrors of war, think of the pain which is borne by the animals engaged in it! How few give so much as a sigh to the labour, the weariness, the suffering of millions of poor dumb brute beasts engaged in ministering to their pleasures, amusements, convenience! We grieve bitterly for our own troubles. We have a tear of sympathy, perhaps, for the griefs of humanity generally. But for the rest of creation, "groaning and travelling in pain together until now," we have scarcely a thought. How different from him who was led to spare Nineveh (Jonah iv. 11) because therein were "more than six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-8.—The plague of murrain of beasts. I. THE ALTERNATIVE AGAIN (vers. 1, 2). Surely Pharaoh was well warned. The analogy of the third plague would have led us to expect that on this occasion—after a second and glaring breach of faith—there would have been no warning. Yet mercy waits upon him. Faithless though he had been, if even yet he will let the people go, all will be forgiven. If not—then judgments. Mark how sacredly, in all this, the freedom of Pharaoh is respected. "He was not put on the actual rack or held over a slow fire till his cruel hand relaxed, and let the Hebrew bondmen go. The appeal was loud, and each time it was repeated he and his people were shaken more severely than before; but after every demand there was a respite, a pause, an opportunity to ponder, and either yield the point or recall a past concession." (Hamilton.)

II. A MURRAIN OF CATTLE (vers. 3-7). This was the form assumed by the fifth plague. It is to be viewed, 1. As a *new blow at Egyptian idolatry*. The sacredness of the cow and ox are hinted at in ch. viii. 26. It may well have been that the sacred beasts themselves, the bull Apis, the calf Mnevis, and the rest, were smitten by the pestilence. 2. As a *fresh illustration of the manifold resources of Jehovah*. The mortality which came upon the cattle was universal in its sweep, carrying off, not only sheep and oxen, but horses, asses, and camels; destructive in its effects, the greater proportion of the cattle of each class falling victims to it; yet carefully discriminative, attacking the cattle of the Egyptians, but leaving unharmed those of the Israelites (ver. 6). 3. As a *plague of increased severity*. The loss sustained by the Egyptians in this mowing down of their cattle was the greatest they had yet experienced. Cattle constitute a large part of the wealth of every nation. They are of importance for food, for burden, and for the produce of the dairy. What a loss it would be to our own nation were our sheep, cows, oxen, horses, and asses, all suddenly destroyed! In the East the oxen were employed for draught, and in the operations of agriculture. Yet the plague was but the intensification of a natural calamity—one with the effects of which we

are not wholly unfamiliar. It may seem "advanced" to scoff at the agency of God in cattle-plague visitations, but the truer philosophy will reverently recognise the fact of such agency, and will not regard it as in the least incompatible with any secondary causes which may be shown to be involved in the production and spread of the disorder. God has this weapon equally with others at his command for chastening a disobedient people. Our wisdom, surely, is to be at peace with him. 4. As a *forewarning of greater judgment*. As yet the *persons* of the Egyptians had escaped. The plagues, however, were coming nearer and nearer them. Their *cattle* had been smitten, and what could the next stroke be, but an infliction upon themselves?

III. THIS PLAGUE ALSO INEFFECTUAL (ver. 7). Pharaoh sent to see if any of the cattle of the children of Israel had died. The connection seems to indicate that his hardening was partly the result of the news that they had all escaped. This, instead of softening, maddened and embittered him. Hitherto Pharaoh has been seen hardening himself *in spite of* the influences brought to bear on him. The fact is to be noted that the plagues here begin to produce a positively evil effect. That which ought to have softened and converted, now only enrages, and confirms in the bad resolution.—J. O.

Vers. 1-7.—*The fifth plague—the murrain among the beasts.* I. THE USE WHICH GOD HERE MAKES OF THE LOWER CREATION. In the three plagues immediately preceding God made the lower creation his scourges. He took little creatures, the bare existence of which many, not perceiving the wisdom of God, think to be unnecessary; and these he increased into a vast and most vexatious multitude. The killing of a frog, a gnat, a fly, we are accustomed in our heedlessness to make nothing of; such killing is but sport to thoughtless lads. But we think very differently of such animals as are spoken of in this fifth plague; horses, oxen, asses, sheep, all animals comprehended here under the general term *cattle*. We should feel it hardly possible to have too many of them. This certainly was the view in ancient times in Scriptural countries, for we read of the wealth of men as being generally measured by the number of animals they possessed. Thus we are led to notice in the course of these plagues, how *God, in his view of the lower creation, rises high above our view*. We look at the lower animals according to their use to us, and thus classify them as helpful or hurtful; God looks at them according to their use to *him*, and in his hands they all become abundantly helpful to further his ends. He uses the frogs, gnats, and flies (or beetles) to inconvenience Pharaoh and his people, if thereby a change of mind may be wrought, and when this fails he takes the cattle and causes them to be destroyed in order to bring about, if possible, the same result. Thus creation serves Jehovah; whether living or dying, destroying or destroyed.

II. A MELANCHOLY ILLUSTRATION OF THE UNITY IN WHICH ALL CREATION IS BOUND. A question may be raised as to the goodness of God in thus destroying those creatures because of the wickedness of man. Why should they suffer because of Pharaoh's obduracy? The answer is that the whole creation of God is bound up in a marvellous unity, from the lowest thing that has life, right up to man himself. It is for man himself to help in settling how far the lower creation shall suffer for his sake. It is no more possible for man to do wrong and the rest of sentient creatures to escape the consequences of his wrong-doing, than it is for man to live recklessly in his own person and expect the organs and limbs of his body to escape suffering. Animals are not to be looked at in themselves, but as being created for the comfort and service of man, and especially that in his use of them it may be shown what his own notions of a right use are. Let man do right, and all living creatures within the circle of his influence share in the blessed consequences; let him do wrong, and their lives must also be disarranged.

III. OBSERVE IN THIS PLAGUE HOW FORCIBLE THE ILLUSTRATION IS OF ISRAEL'S EXEMPTION FROM THE MURRAIN. The wealth of Israel was peculiarly pastoral wealth; of the *very* kind, therefore, which was smitten in this plague. Hence all the more noticeable is the exemption of the Israelites and all the more impressive. If it had been a pestilence coming down upon the country generally, irrespective of territory and of special Divine control, it would have injured Israel a great deal more than Egypt.

IV. WHAT A CLEAR MANIFESTATION THERE IS IN THIS PLAGUE OF HOW REASONLESS AND INFATUATED THE OBDURACY OF PHARAOH IS BECOMING. He is inflexible, not only

without reason, but against reason. Not content with dismissing the rumours that come to his ears concerning the exemption of Israel's cattle from the pestilence, he sends to certify himself of the fact, which makes his continued obduracy all the more evidently unreasonable. What excuse was there for a man who asked in the way Pharaoh asked, even after it had been made clear to him that of the cattle of the children of Israel not one had died? It is sad when a man dismisses in this way even the appearance of having reason for what he does, when he says, "I will not, because I will not, and there is an end of it."—Y.

Vers. 1-7.—GOD'S MERCY IN TEMPORAL JUDGMENTS. Hitherto no great loss had been inflicted; now their cattle is taken. In God's mercy the afflictions deepen that Egypt may forsake the path of death. When the Lord's hand falls in heavier blows it is to save from something worse which lies beyond. Israel's calamities preceded her captivity. God's chastisements fall that we may not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. xi. 32).

II. CONVICTION DOES NOT ALWAYS COMPEL OBEDIENCE. Pharaoh had already two proofs that the murrain was from the hand of God. He had foretold it, and it came at the time he said it would come. He himself seeks a third proof; he sends to Goshen, and finds that there was "not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." Yet he does not bow under the hand of God. Conviction may co-exist with impenitence and stubborn persistence in sin, but, when it does, it is the mark of a soul given over to destruction. The devils believe and tremble.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 8-12.—THE SIXTH PLAGUE. The sixth plague was sent, like the third, without notice given. It was also, like the third, a plague which inflicted direct injury upon the person. There was a very solemn warning in it; for the same power that could afflict the body with "boils and blains," i.e., with a severe cutaneous disease accompanied by pustulous ulcers—could also (it must have been felt) smite it with death. It is uncertain what exactly the malady was. Some have supposed elephantiasis, some "black leprosy," some merely an eruptive disease such as is even now common in Egypt during the autumn. But it is, at any rate, evident that the malady was exceedingly severe—"the magicians could not stand before Moses" because of it (ver. 11). If it was "the hoth of Egypt" (Deut. xxviii. 27), as seems probable, since the name in the Hebrew is the same, it was incurable. Pharaoh and his people were warned by it that God's power would be shown on themselves, not in the way of mere annoyance—as with the earlier plagues—but of serious injury—and if so, why not of death? Thus, the sixth plague heralded the tenth, and, except the tenth, was the most severe of all.

Ver. 8—Ashes of the furnace. Rather "soot from the furnace." The word commonly used in Hebrew for "ashes" is different. Many recondite reasons have been brought

forward for the directions here given. But perhaps the object was simply to show that as water, and earth (ch. viii. 13) and air (ch. x. 13) could be turned into plagues, so fire could be. The "soot of the furnace" might well represent fire, and was peculiarly appropriate for the production of a disease which was in the main an "inflammation." It is not likely that Moses imitated any superstitious practice of the priests of Egypt. **Toward the heaven.** The act indicated that the plague would come from heaven—i.e. from God. **In the sight of Pharaoh.** Compare ch. vii. 20. It is probable that the symbolic act which brought the plague was performed "in the sight of Pharaoh" in every case, except where the plague was unannounced, though the fact is not always recorded.

Ver. 9.—It shall become small dust. Rather, "It shall be as dust." No physical change is intended by the expression used, but simply that the "soot" or "ash" should be spread by the air throughout all Egypt, as dust was wont to be spread. And shall be a boil breaking forth with blains. Literally, "an inflammation, begetting pustules." The description would apply to almost any eruptive disease. The attempts definitely to determine what exactly the malady was, seem to be futile—more especially as diseases are continually changing their forms, and a malady which belongs to the fourteenth or fifteenth century before our era is almost certain to have been different from any now prevalent. The word "blains"—now obsolete as a separate word—appears in "chilblains."

Ver. 10.—**The furnace.** It is perhaps not very important what kind of "furnace" is meant. But the point has been seriously debated. Some suppose a furnace for the consumption of victims, human or other; some a baking oven, or cooking stove; others a furnace for smelting metal; others again a limekiln. The ordinary meaning of the word used, *kibshon*, is a "brick-kiln;" but bricks were not often baked in Egypt. Nor is it at all clear that any victims were ever consumed in furnaces. Probably either a brick-kiln or a furnace for the smelting of metals is meant.

Ver. 11.—**The magicians could not stand.** It is gathered from this that the magicians had, up to this time, been always in attendance when the miracles were wrought, though they

had now for some time failed to produce any counterfeits of them. On this occasion their persistency was punished by the sudden falling of the pestilence upon themselves with such severity that they were forced to quit the royal presence and hasten to their homes to be nursed.

Ver. 12.—**And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.** Up to this time the hardening of Pharaoh's heart has been ascribed to himself, or expressed indefinitely as a process that was continually going on—now for the first time it is positively stated that God hardened his heart, as he had threatened that he would (ch. iv. 21). On the general law of God's dealings with wicked men, see the comment on the above passage.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 8—12.—*Sin punished by physical suffering, but such suffering not always a punishment for sin.* God has many weapons in his quiver wherewith to chastise sin. One of them is physical pain. He can cause the limbs to ache, the temples to throb, the blood to be inflamed, the breathing to labour, the head to be racked, the nerves to thrill and tingle—the whole body, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, to be nothing but a mass of "wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." There is no part of our frame, no process, no function, but can be made the seat of an intolerable agony. God, for the most part, spares us, in the hope that his goodness and long-suffering will lead us to repentance. He had long spared Pharaoh and the Egyptians—had shown them his power in ways that annoyed and harassed, but did not seriously hurt. Now he must adopt severer measures. So his hand is laid upon their bodies, which are smitten with disease, disfigured, made loathsome to the eye, and racked with physical suffering. Here we may note three things:—

I. GOD PUNISHES SIN TO A LARGE EXTENT IN THIS WAY. Many sins have physical consequences attached to them by a natural law, which are in the highest degree painful, which injure the health, destroy the tissues, produce disease, madness, idiocy. Men know these consequences, but hope that they may individually escape them. As Moses and Aaron warned in vain, so now vain too often are the uplifted voices of God's ministers. Nine-tenths, probably, of the physical suffering in England at the present day is caused by those sins of intemperance and uncleanness which are the crying evils of our age and country, and which nothing seems able to uproot or even seriously to diminish. Children are born now for the most part with the seeds of disease in them, which are the consequence of their parents' vices. They lack the physical stamina and the moral vigour which they would have possessed, had their parents led good, pious, consistent, religious lives. They have unhealthy appetites, desires, cravings, which they would not have had but for their parents' sins. Too often, to all this is added the force of bad example. Intemperance and uncleanness follow, and the inborn germs of disease are stimulated into activity; pain follows pain, agony follows agony. A wretched life is terminated by an early death. If they leave children behind them, *their* case is even more hopeless. The physical taint is deepened. The moral strength to resist is weaker. Happy is it if God takes the little ones away from the evil to come.

II. GOD DOES NOT EXEMPT FROM THIS PUNISHMENT EITHER THE WEALTHY OR THE HIGHLY EDUCATED. "The boil was on the magicians." The taint of uncleanness, the mental weakness which results from habits of intemperance afflict the great, the rich, the "upper ten thousand," as surely as their humbler fellow-subjects who herd in courts and alleys. There are great families in which it is a well-known fact that intemperance has become hereditary. There are others where the heir never lives to the age of thirty. No rank—not even royal rank—exempts from subjection to hygienic laws. Neither does intellect nor education. It may be that the intellectual and highly educated are less likely than others to plunge into dissipation and sensual vices. But if,

in spite of their higher nature, they give the reins to their lower, the same results follow as in the case of the least gifted of their fellow-men. Retribution reaches them. They "receive within themselves the reward of their iniquity." Their physical nature, no less than their moral, is tainted; and pain, suffering, often agony, are their portion.

III. THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE PUNISHMENT OFTEN HARDEN THEMSELVES. The boil was on the magicians; but we do not hear that the magicians submitted themselves, or owned the supremacy of Jehovah. No now, those whose sin draws down upon them suffering rarely repent, rarely forsake their sin, rarely humble themselves beneath the chastening rod of the Almighty. No doubt drunkards are occasionally reformed and profligates reclaimed. But for one lost sheep thus recovered, how many scores perish in their evil courses, and descend the rapid incline which conducts to the gulf of destruction? We are amazed at the obstinacy of Pharaoh; but we are most of us just as obstinate. Nothing will induce us to give up our pet vices. We cling to them, even when the boil is upon us. If we give them up for a time, we recur to them. If we leave them off in act, we dwell fondly upon them in thought and imagination. O hard human hearts, that will not yield to God's discipline of pain, when sent as chastisement! What can ye expect, but that chastisement will give place to vengeance? Physical suffering is sometimes sent, not to punish, but to refine and purify. Job's comforters supposed that one so afflicted must have committed some great crime, or be concealing some habitual vice of a grave character. But it was not so. The sufferings of saints are blessings. They give a fellowship with Christ, which nothing else can give. They make the saint rehearse in thought, over and over again, each step of that grievous, yet blessed *via dolorosa*, along which he went upon his way to the Cross of Calvary. They intensify faith and love—they give assurance of acceptance (Heb. xii. 6)—they elevate, purify, sanctify. Earth has no lovelier sight than that not uncommon one of a crippled sufferer, stretched day after day and year after year upon a bed of pain, yet always cheerful, always thoughtful for others, always helpful by advice, kind word, even (if their strength allows) kind acts. Such blessed ones live with Christ, suffer with Christ, feel themselves to be in Christ; as St. Paul says, they "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in their flesh" (Col. i. 24), and "are joyful in their tribulation" (2 Cor. vii. 4).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—13.—*The plague of boils and blains.* This plague, like the third, was unannounced. God varies his methods. There was need for some token being given of God's severe displeasure at Pharaoh's gross abuse of his goodness and forbearance. This plague is distinguished from the rest by being introduced with a significant action.

I. THE ACTION INTRODUCING THE PLAGUE (vers. 8—10). Hitherto the only actions employed had been the stretching out of Aaron's rod, and in the case of the third plague, the smiting of the dust with it. Now, Moses is instructed to take handfuls of the ashes from the furnace and sprinkle them towards heaven in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants. The performance of so solemn an act implied that a new stage was being reached in Pharaoh's hardening, as also in God's punitive dealings with him. From this point onwards matters are rapidly developed to a crisis. The act was symbolical, and may be variously interpreted. 1. As a *challenge to the Egyptian Deities*, specially Neit, "who bore the designation of 'The Great Mother of the highest heaven,' and was worshipped as the tutelary goddess of Lower Egypt" (Canon Cook). 2. As *connected with the scattering of the ashes of human victims to avert evil from the land.* This was done, or had been done, in the days of the Shepherds, in the worship of Sutech or Typhon. The victims were usually foreigners, perhaps often Hebrews. "After being burnt alive on a high altar, their ashes were scattered in the air by the priests, in the belief that they would avert evil from all parts whither they were blown" (Geikie). The sprinkling of ashes by Moses, and their descent, not in blessing, but in boils and blains, would thus have a terrible significance. 3. As *symbolical of the laying of a curse upon the people.* It is, at least in some parts of the East, a practice to take ashes and throw them into the air, in token of giving effect to an imprecation. Most probable of all,—4. As a *symbol of retribution for the*

sufferings of Israel. The "furnace" is a common Scripture emblem for the bitter slavery of the Hebrews (Gen. xv. 17; Deut. iv. 20; 1 Kings viii. 57; Is. xlviii. 10; Jer. xi. 4). Ashes taken from the furnace and sprinkled towards heaven, whence they descended in a plague, would thus naturally symbolise the return upon Pharaoh and his servants of the cruelties with which they had afflicted Israel. The cry of the sufferers in the furnace had entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. The evil deeds of the afflicters were now to come back upon them in retribution. It was as though the ashes of the victims sacrificed in the long tyranny were rising in vengeance against the oppressor.

II. THE PECULIARITY OF THE PLAGUE IN THE SMITING OF THE PERSONS (ver. 10). The disease with which the Egyptians were smitten was painful, loathsome, and excruciatingly severe as compared with ordinary inflictions of a similar nature. Tortured in their bodies, they were "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (Rom. i. 27). This experience of sore personal suffering ought surely to have arrested their folly. It showed them how absolutely helpless they were in the hands of God. The plague was universal (ver. 11). Not one could boast against another. The plague was peculiarly afflictive to a people which prided itself on its cleanliness. It smote beasts as well as men. What a terrible calamity! The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the crown of the head there was no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores (Is. i. 6). Yet, instead of repenting, the people appear only to have been stung to further revolt. So it was, at least, with their king. 1. An image of the condition of the sinner. 2. A new proof of the power of God. The hand of God is to be seen in the infliction of diseases. God threatens, in Deuteronomy, to lay the evil diseases of Egypt upon the Israelites if they should prove disobedient (Deut. xxix. 60). 3. An instance of the inefficacy of bodily sufferings to produce repentance. Cf. Rev. xvi. 10, 11, "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

III. THE DEFEAT OF THE MAGICIANS (ver. 11). They could not now even *stand* before Moses. Pharaoh is being left more and more alone in his resistance.

IV. PHARAOH STILL HARDENED (ver. 12). Before, one plague was the utmost he could hold out against. He yielded under the *second* and the *fourth*. Now he maintains his attitude of resistance under two plagues in succession.—J. O.

Vers. 8—12.—*The sixth plague—the boils and blains.* Only the barest conjectures are possible as to why these ashes of the furnace were taken as materials whence to draw this sixth plague. If we look at the first two plagues we see that they come out of the water. The next plague, that of the gnats, comes out of the dust of the earth, and the flies may be taken as having the same origin. The murrain probably arose through a vitiating change in the food of the animals; and here again we are directed to look downwards to the earth, out of which comes the food both for man and beast. Next comes this sixth plague, and by the mention of ashes of the furnace it would almost seem as if God meant his people to understand that all the useful elements in nature were to do their part in plaguing Pharaoh. Water has had its share, the earth its share, fire now gets its share; and there only remains the air above and around, and out of this, sure enough, there presently came the hail, the locusts,

Warping on the Eastern wind,

and the thick darkness. Thus, in all visible directions where man looks for blessing, God meets him with a stern intimation that he can turn the blessing into a curse. So much for the origin of this plague; now with regard to its form.—NOTE,

I. THAT GOD'S PUNISHMENTS NOW ADVANCE TO TAKE UP THEIR ABODE IN THE BODIES OF PHARAOH AND HIS PEOPLE. As God can take the lower animals, which he has made for our use, and turn them at his pleasure into a blessing or a curse, so he can come nearer still, and make our bodies, which are agents of the most exquisite pleasures, into agents of pain just as exquisite. Notice that in the very mode of infliction *there was a mixture of severity and mercy.* Severity, because undoubtedly there would be terrible pain; mercy, because probably the pain was

confined to the surface of the body; none the easier to bear, certainly; and yet easier in this, that it did not belong to an affliction of the great vital organs. Severity again, on the other hand, just because it affected the sensitive surface of the body. It is through our sensations that God has caused so much both of pleasure and information to come. Thus God, who had given so much delight to Pharaoh and his people, through making them so sensitive to the outward world, now deranges all the minute nerves and vessels, and by spreading boils and blains over the surface of the body he effectually stops all enjoyment of life. We know that it is possible for a person to be seriously ill—even fatally so, perhaps confined as a hopeless invalid for years—and yet to get considerable enjoyment out of life, as in reading and in light occupations for the mind. But what pleasure can be got when, from head to foot, the body is covered with boils and blains? As long as this sort of pain lasts, little else can be thought of than how to get rid of it.

II. As in the plague of the gnats, so here in the plague of the boils and blains, OUR ATTENTION IS SPECIALLY DIRECTED TO THE MAGICIANS. On the former occasion, with or without sincerity, they had said, "This is the finger of God;" now they are in themselves, so to speak, the finger of God. They can neither avert nor dissemble their subjection to the power that works through Moses. At first, doubtless, they had looked upon him with haughtiness, audacity, and scorn, as being hardly worth a moment's attention. Very likely it was counted a great condescension to turn the rods into serpents. But now, whatever feeling be in their hearts, the hold that Jehovah has on their bodies is only too evident. Silence and outward serenity are impossible under such suffering as this. The twitchings of the face cannot be concealed, the groan cannot be suppressed, the unquailing attitude cannot be maintained. Who shall tell what individual humiliations and defeats lie behind this brief expression: "The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils." *Because of the boils!* It was not a very dignified sort of disaster; not very pleasant to recall in after times. These magicians, we may imagine, had scorned the very name of Jehovah, worse, mayhap, than Pharaoh himself. And now in these boils and blains there is, suppressed as it were, scorn and mockery from Jehovah in return. Opposers of God may not only have to be brought down from their pride, but in such a way as will involve them in ridicule and shame. The exposure of falsehood is only a work of time, and as we see here, it can be accomplished in a comparatively short time. Pain effectually drives away all dissembling, and nature proves too much even for the man to whom art has become second nature.—Y.

Vers. 8—12.—I. *The Sixth Plague. THE MEANS USED.* Ashes were taken from the brick-kiln in which the Israelites toiled, and in Pharaoh's presence sprinkled in mute appeal toward heaven. The memorials of oppression lifted up before God will fall in anguish upon the oppressors (James v. 1—5). The French Revolution and the ages of giant wrong that had gone before. American slavery and its punishment.

II. THE SUDDENNESS OF THE INFLICTION. There was no warning. The dust was cast up, and immediately the plague was upon man and beast. The judgment of wickedness will come as in a moment. Sodom. The flood.

III. THE SHAME OF THE MAGICIANS. 1. Upon them the plague seems to have been more severe than upon others. Upon the abettors of other men's tyranny and wrong, God's judgment will fall heaviest. The deep responsibility of Christian teachers and men of influence and talent. Let them see to it that they are on the side of righteousness, and not of the world's class—selfishness and manifold wrong. 2. They were brought to shame in the presence of those who trusted in them. The falsehood of their pretensions was exposed by their inability to defend themselves. When God visits for the world's sin, there will be everlasting confusion and shame for its apologists and abettors.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 13—26.—THE SEVENTH PLAGUE. The sixth plague had had no effect at all upon the hard heart of the Pharaoh, who cared nothing for the physical sufferings of his subjects, and apparently was not himself afflicted by the malady. Moses was therefore ordered to ap-

pear before him once more, and warn him of further and yet more terrible visitations which were impending. The long message (vers. 13—19) is without any previous parallel, and contains matter calculated to make an impression even upon the most callous of mortals. First there is an announcement that God is about to send "*all his plagues*" upon king and people (ver. 14); then a solemn warning that a pestilence might have been sent which would have swept both king and people from the face of the earth (ver. 15); and finally (ver. 18) an announcement of the actual judgment immediately impending, which is to be a hail-storm of a severity never previously known in Egypt, and but rarely experienced elsewhere. Pharaoh is moreover told that the whole object of his having been allowed by God to continue in existence is the glory about to accrue to his name from the exhibition of his power in the deliverance of his people (ver. 16). A peculiar feature of the plague is the warning (ver. 19) whereby those who believed the words of Moses, were enabled to escape a great part of the ill effects of the storm. It is a remarkable indication of the impression made by the previous plagues, that the warning was taken by a considerable number of the Egyptians, who by this means saved their cattle and their slaves (ver. 20). The injury caused by the plague was very great. The flax and barley crops, which were the most advanced, suffered complete destruction. Men and beasts were wounded by the hail-stones, which might have been—as hail-stones sometimes are—jagged pieces of ice; and some were even killed, either by the hail (see Josh. x. 11), or by the lightning which accompanied it. Even trees were damaged by the force of the storm, which destroyed the foliage and broke the branches.

Ver. 13.—*Rise up early.* Compare ch. vii. 15, and viii. 20. The practice of the Egyptian kings to rise early and proceed at once to the dispatch of business is noted by Herodotus (ii. 173). It is a common practice of oriental monarchs. And say unto him. The same message is constantly repeated in the same words as a token of God's unchangingness. See ch. viii. 1—20; ix. 1; x. 3; etc.

Ver. 14.—*I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart.* A very emphatic announcement. At this time contrasts the immediate future with the past, and tells Pharaoh that the hour of mild warnings and slight plagues is gone by. Now he is to ex-

pect something far more terrible. God will send *all his plagues*—every worst form of evil—in rapid succession; and will send them *against his heart.* Each will strike a blow on that perverse and obdurate heart—each will stir his nature to its inmost depths. Conscience will wake up and insist on being heard. All the numerous brood of selfish fears and alarms will bestir themselves. He will tremble, and be amazed and perplexed. He will forego his pride and humble himself, and beg the Israelites to be gone, and even intreat that, ere they depart, the leaders whom he has so long opposed, will give him their blessing (ch. x. 1. 32). *That thou mayest know.* Pharaoh was himself to be convinced that the Lord God of Israel was, at any rate, the greatest of all gods. He was not likely to desert at once and altogether the religion in which he had been brought up, or to regard its gods as non-existent. But he might be persuaded of one thing—that Jehovah was far above them. And this he practically acknowledges in vers. 27 and 28.

Ver. 15.—*For now I will stretch out my hand.* It is generally agreed by modern writers that this translation fails to give the true sense of the original. God does not here announce what he is going to do, but what he might have done, and would have done, but for certain considerations. Translate, "For now might I have stretched out my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence; and then thou hadst been cut off from the earth." Scripture shows that pestilence is always in God's power, and may at any time be let loose to scourge his foes, and sweep them into the pit of destruction. (See Lev. xxvi. 25; Num. xi. 33; xiv. 12; xvi. 46; 2 Sam. xxiv. 13—15, etc.) He had not done now what he might have done, and what Pharaoh's obstinacy might well have provoked him to do; and why? On account of the considerations contained in the next verse.

Ver. 16.—*And in very deed, etc.* Rather, "But truly for this cause have I caused thee to stand," *i.e.*, "kept thee alive and sustained thee in the position thou occupiest," for to shew to thee my power—*i.e.*, to impress thee, if it is possible that thou canst be impressed, with the greatness of my power, and the foolishness of any attempt to resist it, and also that my name may be declared throughout all the earth—*i.e.*, that attention may be called widely among the neighbouring nations to the great truth that there is really but one God, who alone can deliver, and whom it is impossible to resist.

Ver. 17.—*As yet.* Rather "still." And the whole verse should be rendered—"Dost thou still oppose thyself against my people, so as not to let them go." The verb translated "oppose"—("exalt" in the A.V.)—is strictly

"to raise a mound, or bank," thence "to obstruct," "oppose."

Ver. 18.—**To-morrow about this time.** As it might have been thought that Moses had done nothing very extraordinary in predicting a storm for the next day, a more exact note of time than usual was here given. Compare ch. viii. 23; ix. 5. **I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail.** Rain, and, still more, hail are comparatively rare in Egypt, though not so rare as stated by some ancient authors (Herod. iii. 10; Pomp. Mel., *De Situ Orbis*, i. 9). A good deal of rain falls in the Lower Country, where the north wind brings air loaded with vapour from the Mediterranean; particularly in the winter months from December to March. Snow, and hail, and thunder are during those months not very uncommon, having been witnessed by many modern travellers, as Pococke, Wansleben, Seetzen, Perry, Tooke, and others. They are seldom, however, of any great severity. Such a storm as here described (see especially vers. 23, 24) would be quite strange and abnormal; no Egyptian would have experienced anything approaching to it, and hence the deep impression that it made (ver. 27). Since the foundation thereof. Not "since the original formation of the country" at the Creation, or by subsequent alluvial deposits, as Herodotus thought (ii. 5—11), but "since Egypt became a nation" (see ver. 24). Modern Egyptologists, or at any rate a large number of them, carry back this event to a date completely irreconcilable with the Biblical chronology—Böckh to B.C. 5702, Unger to B.C. 5613, Mariette and Lenormant to B.C. 5004, Brugsch to B.C. 4455, Lepsius to B.C. 3852, and Bunsen (in one place) to B.C. 3623. The early Egyptian chronology is, however, altogether uncertain, as the variety in these dates sufficiently intimates. Of the dynasties before the (so-called) eighteenth, only seven are proved to be historical, and the time that the Old and Middle Empires lasted is exceedingly doubtful. All the known facts are sufficiently met by such a date as B.C. 2500—2400 for the Pyramid Kings, before whose time we have nothing authentic. This is a date which comes well within the period allowed for the formation of nations by the chronology of the Septuagint and Samaritan versions.

Ver. 19.—**Thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field.** During winter and early spring, the Egyptians kept their cattle "in the field," as other nations commonly do. When the inundation began (June or July), they were obliged to bring them into the cities and enclosed villages, and house them. The time of the "Plague of Hail" appears by all the indications to have been the middle of February. **They shall die.** Human life was now for the first time threatened. Any herdsmen that remained with the cattle in the open field and

did not seek the shelter of houses or sheds would be smitten by the huge jagged hailstones with such force that they would be killed outright, or else die of their wounds.

Ver. 20.—**He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh.** It is a new fact that any of the Egyptians had been brought to "fear the word of Jehovah." Probably, the effect of the plagues had been gradually to convince a considerable number, not so much that Jehovah was the one True God as that he was a great and powerful god, whose chastisements were to be feared. Consequently there were now a certain number among the "servants of Pharaoh" who profited by the warning given (ver. 19), and housed their cattle and herdsmen, in anticipation of the coming storm.

Ver. 21.—**He that regarded not.** If there were men who believed in the power and truthfulness of Jehovah, there were probably more who did not believe. As Lot "seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (Gen. xix. 14), so Moses and Aaron appeared to the great mass of the Egyptians. As observed above, a hail-storm that could endanger life, either of man or beast, was beyond all Egyptian experience, and must have seemed almost impossible.

Ver. 22.—**Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven.** The action was appropriate, as the plague was to come from the heaven. Similarly, in the first and second plagues, Aaron's hand had been stretched out upon the waters (ch. vii. 19, 20; viii. 6); and in the third upon "the dust of the ground" (ch. viii. 17). **And upon every herb of the field—i.e., upon all forms of vegetable life.** (Compare Gen. i. 30; ix. 3.)

Ver. 23.—**Moses stretched forth his rod.** In the last set of three plagues, the earthly agent was Moses (ch. ix. 10; ch. x. 13, 22), whose diffidence seems to have worn off as time went on, and he became accustomed to put himself forward. **Thunder and hail.** Thunder had not been predicted; but it is a common accompaniment of a hail-storm, the change of temperature produced by the discharge of electricity no doubt conducing to the formation of hailstones. **The fire ran along upon the ground.** Some very peculiar electrical display seems to be intended—something corresponding to the phenomena called "fireballs," where the electric fluid does not merely flash momentarily, but remains for several seconds, or even minutes, before it disappears.

Ver. 24.—**Fire mingled with the hail.** Rather, "There was hail, and in the midst of the hail a fire inrolling itself." The expression used is the same which occurs in Ezek. i. 4. It seems to mean a fire that was not a mere flash, but collected itself into a mass and was seen for some considerable time.

Ver. 25.—**The hail smote. It is to the hail**

and not to the lightning that the great destruction of men and beasts is attributed. Such lightning, however, as is spoken of, would probably kill some. All that was in the field. According to the warning given (ver. 19), the herdsmen and cattle left in the open air and not brought into the sheds were killed. The hail smote every herb of the field. Even in our own temperate climate, which is free from all atmospheric extremes, hailstorms occasionally do so much damage to crops that it has been

found desirable to organise a special insurance against loss from this cause. Such hail as that described in the text would greatly injure every crop that was many inches above the soil, and entirely destroy such as had gone to ear. (See below, ver. 31.) Broke every tree—*i.e.*, damaged the smaller branches and twigs, thus destroying the prospect of fruit.

Ver. 26.—Only in the land of Goshen, etc. Compare ch. viii. 22; ix. 4; x. 23.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 13—19.—*The method of the Divine Rule over bad men illustrated by God's message to Pharaoh.* The message illustrates,

I. THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD TOWARDS SINNERS. "For now might I have stretched out my hand and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence" (ver. 15). Pharaoh had opposed himself to God so long, had shown himself in various ways so wicked, that he well deserved to have been stricken with plague and made to perish miserably. He had been insolent and blasphemous, when first appealed to in the name of Jehovah (ch. v. 2); cruel and vindictive, when he increased the Israelites' burdens (*ib.* 7—9); hard-hearted, when the taskmasters complained to him (*ib.* 15—18); obdurate and perverse, in resisting so many signs and wonders wrought for the purpose of moving him (ch. vii. 10—13, 20—23; viii. 5, 6, 16—19, 20—24; ix. 6, 7, 10—12); pitiless and false, in twice breaking his promises (ch. viii. 8—15, 28—32). Yet God had spared him. He had "made him to stand" (ver. 16)—*i.e.*, preserved him in being—and had retained him in his high station, when he might readily have caused his overthrow by conspiracy or otherwise. So long-suffering was he, that he even now addressed to him fresh warnings, and gave him fresh signs of his power, thus by his goodness striving to lead him to repentance.

II. THE POWER OF GOD TO BREAK THE WILL EVEN OF THE MOST DETERMINED SINNER. God can so multiply, and vary, and prolong his judgments, that at last the power of endurance, even in the case of the most obdurate sinner, is worn out. First he sends comparatively slight afflictions, then more serious ones; finally, if the stubborn will still refuses to bend, he visits the offender with "all his plagues" (ver. 14). Man cannot triumph over God. Kings may oppose their wills to his, but they cannot make him succumb. He "refrains the spirit of princes," and shows himself "wonderful among the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxvi. 12). Even the greatest monarchs—the present Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar—are powerless against him. He "refrains" them, breaks them, humbles them, works his will in spite of them. And at what a cost to themselves! Unfortunately kings, and even less exalted sinners, will rarely learn wisdom till too late. He has to send "all his plagues" upon them; whereas, if they had been wise, they might have escaped with a light chastisement.

III. THE FACT THAT ALL RESISTANCE OF GOD'S WILL BY SINNERS TENDS TO INCREASE, AND IS DESIGNED TO INCREASE, HIS GLORY. "The fierceness of man turns to God's praise." He has endowed men with free will, and allows them the free exercise of their free will, because, do as they like, they cannot thwart his purposes. Being, as he is, the God of order, and not of confusion or anarchy, he could not have allowed free will at all to his creatures, if their employment of it prevented the accomplishment of his own designs and intentions. But it does not; it is foreseen, taken into account, provided for. And the only result of men's opposition to his will is the increase of his glory and of his praise. Great kings are seen arraying themselves against God, determining to take Jerusalem, like Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 35), or to destroy the infant Church, like Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 1—3), or to rebuild Jerusalem, like the apostate Julian, or to crush the Reformation, like Philip II. of Spain—and they do their utmost; they levy armies, or man fleets, or collect materials and engage thousands of workmen, or murder and imprison at their pleasure—but nothing comes of it. Their efforts fail utterly. And the sole result of all their exertions is, that men see

and recognise God's hand in their overthrow, and that his glory is thereby increased. All this is commonly declared in Scripture, and especially in the Psalms (Ps. ii. 4; v. 10; vii. 11—17; ix. 15—20, &c.). The message sent by God to Pharaoh through Moses *adds*, that the result is designed. "For this cause have I *made thee stand* (marg.), for to show to thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout *all the earth*" (ver. 16). Compare ch. xiv. 17, 18; xv. 14—16; Josh. ii. 9—11.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 13—35.—*The plague of hail.* This plague was introduced with ampler remonstrance. Moses was commanded to proceed to Pharaoh, and to warn him in stronger and more decisive language than he had yet employed of the folly of this insane resistance. Ver. 15 should probably be translated, "For now indeed *had I* stretched forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with the pestilence, thou hadst then been cut off from the earth;" and then ver. 16 will give the reason why God had not cut Pharaoh off, but had "made him stand" (marg.), viz.: that he might show forth in him his power. It does not follow that God would not have preferred to use Pharaoh for his glory in another way than that of destroying him. This strong representation of God's purpose was itself designed to influence the king for good, and had a spark of sense remained to him, it would have wrought an immediate change in his volitions. In that case God's procedure would have undergone a corresponding alteration. For God wills not the death of any sinner (Ez. xviii. 23—32), and threatenings of this kind, as shown by the case of the Ninevites, are always conditional (Jonah iv.). At the same time, God's sovereignty is seen in the way in which he *utilizes* the wicked man whose persistence in his wickedness is foreseen by him. "God might have caused Pharaoh to be born in a cabin, where his proud obstinacy would have been displayed with no less self-will, but without any historical consequence; on the other hand, he might have placed on the throne of Egypt at that time a weak, easy-going man, who would have yielded at the first shock. What would have happened? Pharaoh in his obscure position would not have been less arrogant and perverse, but Israel would have gone forth from Egypt without *éclat*. . . . God did not therefore create the indomitable pride of Pharaoh as it were to gain a point of resistance, and reflect his glory; he was content to use it for this purpose" (Godet on Rom. iv. 17, 18). Notice—

1. THE TERRIBLE RAISING UP (ver. 16). We are taught, 1. That God can find a use even for the wicked (Prov. xvi. 4). 2. That God places wicked men in positions in which their true character is manifested, and his own power and righteousness are glorified in their judgment. 3. That this is not the *primary* desire of God in relation to any wicked man. He would prefer his conversion. If it be urged that the situations in which men are placed are not always those most *favourable* to their conversion, this may be conceded. But they are not placed in these positions arbitrarily, but under a system of administration which regards each individual, not simply as an end in himself, but as a means to a yet higher end, the carrying forward of the world purpose as a whole. God cannot deal with the individual as if there were no such thing as history, or as if that individual constituted the sum-total of humanity, or as if his salvation were the only and the all-ruling consideration in the arrangement of the world. God *disposes* of the evil of the world, decrees the lines and directions of its developments, the persons in whom, and the situations under which, it will be permitted to reveal and concentrate itself; but he neither creates the evil, nor delights in it, and is all the while working for its final and effectual overthrow. No situation in which God places man *necessitates* him to be evil. 4. That the sinner's evil, accordingly, is his own, and his ruin self-wrought. This is shown—and notably in the case of Pharaoh—by the fact that God's dealings with him are fitted to change him if he *will* be changed (Matt. xxiii. 37).

II. A PLAGUE WITH APPALLING ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES (verse xviii. 23—26). This plague, like many of its predecessors, was, 1. Severe in its character (ver. 24). 2. Destructive in its effects (ver. 25). 3. Distinguishing in its range. It spare the land of Goshen (ver. 26). But the peculiar circumstance connected with it—that which

marked it as the first of a new order of plagues—was, 4. *Its combination of terror with sublimity*, its power to *appal* as well as to *punish*. A last attempt was to be made to break down the opposition of the monarch by displays of God's majesty and omnipotence which should shake his very heart (ver. 14). Instead of frogs, lice, flies, pestilence, and boils on man and beast, Pharaoh was now to be made to hear "voices of God" in the thunder (ver. 28, Heb.); was to see dreadful lightnings, masses of fire, descending from the sky, and rolling in balls of fire along the ground (ver. 23); was to witness his land smitten with terrific hail "very grievous," the like of which had never been seen in Egypt "since it became a nation" (ver. 24). A thunderstorm is at all times terrible, and when very severe, inspires an awe which few natures can resist. Accompanied by preternatural terrors, its effect would be simply overwhelming. This was the intention here. The strokes of God were to go to the king's heart. They were to convince him that there was "none like Jehovah in all the earth" (ver. 14). They were to be plagues, as Calvin says, "that would not only strike the head and arms, but penetrate the very heart, and inflict a mortal wound." The thunder is introduced as being "the mightiest manifestation of the omnipotence of God, which speaks therein to men (Rev. x. 3, 4), and warns them of the terrors of judgment" (Keil). On the peculiar effect of the thunderstorm in awakening the religious nature, see a paper on "God in Nature and History," Expositor, March, 1881. To the superstitious minds of the heathen these unexampled terrors would seem of awful significance.

III. TWOFOLD EFFECTS OF WARNINGS (vers. 20, 21). 1. God's judgments, like his overtures of grace, are seldom *wholly* ineffectual. If the king was hardened, there were at least *some* in Egypt who had become alive to the gravity of the situation, "who feared the word of the Lord." Such were to be found even among the servants of Pharaoh, in the palace itself. The preaching of the Gospel, even under the most unpropitious circumstances, will seldom fail of *some* fruit. There were "certain men" which "clave" to Paul, "and believed" at Athens; "among the which was Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts xvii. 34). There were "saints"—*mirabile dictu*—even in Nero's palace (Phil. iv. 22). 2. The division of men, in their relation to the Word of God, is a very simple one. There are those who fear and regard it, and there are those who disregard and disobey it. Paul speaks of those to whom Gospel-preaching is a savour of death unto death, and of those to whom it is a savour of life unto life (2 Cor. ii. 16). Between the two classes there is no third. The effects of his own preaching are thus summed up, "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (Acts xxviii. 24). 3. Faith reveals itself in obedience. He that feared God's word brought in his cattle; he that disregarded it left them in the fields. 4. The wisdom of regarding God, and the folly of disregarding him, were made manifest by the result.

IV. PHARAOH'S CAPITULATION (vers. 27, 28). The supernatural concomitants of this appalling visitation so unnerved the king that he was induced again to send for Moses. He did not yield till the plague was actually on the land, and only then, because he could not help it. The terms in which he makes his submission show, 1. His undisguised terror. 2. His thorough conviction that he was in the hands of the God of the whole earth. Pharaoh had by this time had a course of instruction in the "evidences," which left no room for further doubt. The most striking feature in his submission, however, is, 3. His confession of sin. "I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (ver. 27). It was good that Pharaoh should be brought to see that it was a righteous demand he was resisting, and that he was inexcusable in resisting it. This much at least the plagues had forced him to acknowledge, and it gave his hardening a yet graver character when subsequently he retracted his word given. But the superficiality of the repentance is very obvious. "I have sinned *this time*;" there is here no adequate sense of the sin he had been guilty of. False repentances have their root in superficial views of sin. They may be produced by terror, under compulsion; but they are accompanied by no real change of heart; and renewed hardening is the only possible outcome of them. "As for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God" (ver. 30).

V. JUDGMENT TEMPERED WITH MERCY. God's mercy in connection with this plague is conspicuous—1. In giving the warning, so that those who regarded his word had the opportunity of removing their servants and cattle (vers. 20, 21). 2. In sparing the

wheat and rye (vers. 31, 32). 3. In removing the plague at the request of Pharaoh, presented through Moses (vers. 28, 29).

VI. HARDENING NOTWITHSTANDING. 1. *Pharaoh* hardened himself (vers. 34, 35). We ask, in surprise, how was such a thing possible? Pride, hate, anger, obstinacy furnish the explanation, though it is truly difficult to conceive how they could so madden a mind as to make it capable of persevering in a course of resistance. *There is* the fact, however, and it is full of terrible warning to us. The hardening was obviously now of the most serious possible kind. Pharaoh's nature had been thoroughly awakened. He was no longer sinning in ignorance, but against clear light and conviction. He had confessed his sin, and promised to obey. Hardening, under these circumstances, was as nearly "sin against the Holy Ghost" as was then possible (John ix. 41). 2. *His servants* hardened themselves (vers. 34). This is a fact which should be well pondered. It might have been thought that only a Pharaoh was capable of such fatuousness. We learn here that there were natures among his servants as susceptible of hardening as his own. We do not need to be Pharaohs to be capable of hardening our hearts against God. Persons in obscure positions can do it as readily as those on the pinnacles of greatness. The king's influence, however, had doubtless much to do with his servants' conduct. They took their cue from their lord. Had he submitted himself, they would have done so also. Because he hardened himself, they must follow suit. What folly! to destroy themselves for the sake of being like a king—of being in the fashion. Learn also the potency of example. Those in high positions have a powerful influence over those dependent upon them. Well for them if they use that influence for God's glory, and not to ruin souls!—J. O.

Ver. 16.—*The road to ruin.* "And in very deed for this cause," &c. (Ex. ix. 16). The character and conduct of Pharaoh as a probationer under the moral government of the Ever Living God is worthy of special and separate consideration. That he was such a probationer should not be simply assumed, but made clearly manifest. All the great light of natural religion shone upon his path (Rom. i. 19—25), like stars in heaven upon the path of every soul. Then there is the inward witness that speaks of the soul, of God, of duty, of immortality (Rom. ii. 14, 15). Within the confines of his empire existed a nation of no less than two millions, to whom had already been confided a part, at least, of the "oracles of God." They were the recipients of such revelations as God had already vouchsafed. Their beliefs ought not to have been unknown to him. Two missionaries, direct from God, Moses and Aaron, were his teachers. They came with full credentials. Providential judgments, not untempered with mercy (for warning after warning came), spake with trumpet tongue. Some of his own people, convinced, probably penitent, pleaded for the right. And yet this soul went from bad to worse. We indicate the stages on the road to ruin. It is only necessary to premise that though the stages are broadly manifest enough, they, in so complicated a character, occasionally overlap, and are blended with each other.

I. UNBELIEF. Pharaoh's of the blankest kind (ver. 2). [Read correctly, "Who is Jehovah"?] The man a God unto himself, as all infidels practically are. The representative of the Sun-God. Note the *independent* stand he takes all through this controversy, as against Jehovah. [On this see Kurtz, Hist. of Old Cov. ii. 292.]

II. SUPERSTITION. So does the pendulum ever swing back from the extremes of belief or non-belief. No soul can rest in that infidelity which virtually deifies self. Hence Pharaoh played off against the representatives of Jehovah, the representatives of the polytheism of Egypt—the magicians. So in modern times. There are the credulities of atheism. Men who will not believe in the sublime truths of revelation fall to intellectual drivelling. Notable instance, Comte's "Religion of Humanity." After all, this is a witness that man cannot live without religion. [In this connection note the connection between magic and idolatry, and of that, possibly, with demons, Kurtz, ii. 246—259.]

III. ALARM. In Pharaoh's case this was especially manifest after the second (viii. 6), fourth (viii. 25), seventh (ix. 27), and eighth (x. 16) visitations.

IV. CONFESSION. After the seventh (ix. 27). No wonder, for God had said before this judgment, "I will at this time send all my plagues upon thy heart." Coming calamity was to be of a deeper and more searching kind. The man seems to have had an access of

real and honest feeling. Sees the sin of the people as well as his own. Confesses. But the confession was not followed up.

V. PROMISE—VIOLATION. After second (viii. 8—15), fourth (viii. 28—32), and seventh (ix. 28—35) plagues. A very common thing with sinners under Divine discipline—promises of amendment—but the sweep onward of the bias toward iniquity is like that of a mighty river, and carries the most earnest vows into the gulf of oblivion.

VI. DISPOSITION TO COMPROMISE. See viii. 25—28, x. 8—11, x. 24. Such penitence as Pharaoh had was one of conditions and compromise. Israel's festival must be "in the land;" then not "far away;" then only the men should go; then all might go, but the cattle must stay behind. So "We will give up sin, but only part of it. We will yield ninety-nine points, not the hundredth. We will give up what we do not care for so much, but keep what we peculiarly like. We will keep all the commandments, but not give up our money. * * We will gain the credit and reputation of religion, but shun the pain and denial of it." (See on "Pharaoh," in Munro's "Sermons on Characters of the Old Testament," vol. i. ser. xv.)

VII. INDIFFERENCE. Stolidity in matters of such high import as religion is a very dangerous condition. Pharaoh assumed after fifth and sixth visitations an attitude of hardened indifference (ix. 7—12).

VIII. HARDNESS OF HEART. Except in the objective announcement made to Moses at the first, there is no statement that God hardened Pharaoh's heart till after the sixth plague (ix. 12). Up to that time Pharaoh hardened his own heart, or the fact simply is stated, that his heart was hardened. In this matter man acts first sinfully, then God judicially.

IX. RESISTANCE TO APPEAL OF OTHERS. See ix. 20, and x. 7.

X. RUIN.—R.

Vers. 13—16.—*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it.* In this comprehensive message from Jehovah, standing as it does about midway in the course of his judgments upon Pharaoh, we have a peculiar and impressive application of the foregoing word of the Psalmist (Ps. xxiv. 1). The word "earth," it will be noticed, stands in a very prominent position in each of the verses 14, 15, 16. Evidently, then, we should give the word an equally prominent position in our thoughts, and connect with it the truths to be drawn out of this message. It will then be seen that Jehovah has many ways of showing that the earth is his and the fullness of it. It is all his; not Pharaoh's, not any other potentate's, not even Israel's—except as Israel is chosen by Jehovah, duly trained and prepared by him, subjected and obedient to him. We have to consider this message, then, under three heads, as suggested by the occurrence of the word "earth" in these three verses. Note, however, first, *the way in which Moses approaches Pharaoh on this occasion.* In ch. vii. 15, he is told to get to Pharaoh in the morning and meet him by the river's brink; thus there is a general indication of time and a particular indication of place. In ch. viii. 20, he is told to go *early* in the morning, as Pharaoh comes forth to the water; thus there is a more particular indication of time. Now, in ch. ix. 13, there is the same particular indication of time, but no reference to place. Thus it seems as if we got a gradation, a sign of increasing pressure and urgency upon Pharaoh. Moses has to be ready for Pharaoh at the very beginning of the day, and then, whenever and wherever he may meet with him, he can deliver his message at once. Pharaoh had the whole day to consider as to the things which were about to happen on the morrow. And now—

I. THERE IS NO ONE LIKE JEHOVAH IN THE WHOLE EARTH, AND PHARAOH IS TO BE MADE TO KNOW THIS. Such is the statement of ver. 14; and of course the whole gist of it lies in the bringing of Pharaoh to a clear and unmistakable knowledge of the supremacy of God over all terrestrial powers. That there is none like God in all the earth may be true, but the thing wanted is to bring that truth *distinctly* and *practically* before our minds, and if *profitably* for us also, then so much the better. This end had to be achieved in the instance of Pharaoh by persistent attacks of Jehovah upon him, attacks ever increasing in effective force, till at last they proved irresistible. It was not enough for others to be assured by Pharaoh's doom that there was none like God in all the earth. Pharaoh must know it for himself, and confess it, not by the ambiguous channel of speech, but by a most decisive act, the committal of

which he cannot avoid (ch. xii. 31—33). And that he may be brought to such a knowledge is the reason of the severe plagues that remain. We might, indeed, count it enough to be told that *Jehovah* had sent all his plagues. We might rest upon *Jehovah's* character, and say that whatever he does is right, even though there be much that at first staggers us, and that continues to perplex. *But the reason for all these plagues is plainly stated*, and if it be looked into it will be seen an ample, cheering, and encouraging reason. Though *Jehovah* is Sovereign of the universe, he does not treat Pharaoh in an arbitrary way; he acts, not as one who says that might makes right, but as using his might in order to secure the attainment of right. Pharaoh's way, on the contrary, is an arbitrary one, without the slightest mitigation or concealment. Everything rests simply on his will; and yet will is too dignified a word—whim would be nearer the mark. And now that proud will is to be subdued and dissolved, so far, at least, as to flow forth in the liberation of Israel, even though immediately they be liberated it hardens again to its former rigidity. The announcement Moses was now to make to Pharaoh we may fairly say would have been inappropriate at an earlier time. It becomes God, in his first approaches to men, to *draw* them, if perchance for their own sakes they may willingly submit; afterwards, when they will not be drawn, then for the sake of others they have to be driven. It is not until Pharaoh fully manifests his selfishness, his malignity, and the reasonless persistency of his refusal, that God indicates the approach of *all his plagues*. The man has been humbled in his circumstances, but his pride of heart remains as erect as ever; and so the full force of *Jehovah* has to be brought upon it in order to lay it low. He is at last to feel in himself, whatever he may say, that the true question is not "Who is *Jehovah*, that Pharaoh should let Israel go?" but, "Who is Pharaoh, that he should keep Israel back?" He has gotten some rudiments and beginnings of this knowledge already, even though they have made no difference in his practice. Every time he has opened his eyes he has seen something fresh, which, however quickly he might close his eyes again, he could not unsee. And now he is on the very point of getting more knowledge, and that in a way very disagreeable to a despot. With alarming rapidity, *his people are about to be impressed with the supremacy of Jehovah* (ch. ix. 20; x. 7).

II. Notice the peculiar reference in ver. 15 to THE DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH. It is spoken of as a being cut off from the earth. It seems that our English version does not give the right tense-rendering in this verse, and that the reference is not to what will happen in the *future*, but to what might have already happened in the *past*. If Pharaoh was not already a dead man, and Israel a free people, there was nothing in this delay for Pharaoh to plume himself upon. *Jehovah* might have smitten him with pestilence, and slain the strong, proud man on his bed, amid humiliations and pains which would have been aggravated by the vanity of the regal splendours around him. He might have made Egypt one great expanse of the dead, a land which the Israelites could have spoiled at their leisure, and then gone forth at any time most convenient to themselves. And if *Jehovah* did not thus slay Pharaoh and liberate Israel, it was because he had purposes of his own to accomplish by the lengthened life of the one and the intensified sufferings of the other. But apart from the question of time, what awful significance there is in the expression, "cut off from the earth!" To this separation, made most effectual, Pharaoh came at last. In considering this expression, notice first of all the *suggestion of our connection with the earth*. A thing cannot be cut off from the earth unless first of all it is connected with it. In respect of many things the connection may seem very slight and unimportant; but in the instance of a human being, the connection is evidently intimate and important; and, until our connection with heaven is established, not only important, but all-important. We are connected with the earth by what we get from it. The very limitations of our bodily constitution remind us of our dependence upon the earth. We are not like the birds with wings to soar away from it, nor like fishes who can breathe vital air under water; we are emphatically of the solid earth. To its kindly fruits we look for our sustenance, and out of it also comes our clothing and shelter. And then from the earth in its still larger sense, "the great globe itself," consider what comes to us in the way of occupation, instruction, interest, pleasure, opportunities of getting and giving in all sorts of ways. From all this Pharaoh was at last cut off; and from all this

we also must one day be cut off. Cut off from the earth, as the tree, at the roots of which the axe has long lain. When the tree has fallen it is still near the earth, but it gets nothing from it. The question for us to ask is, whether, while the tree of our natural earthly life still stands, we are having the roots of a nobler, richer life, even a Divine one, striking down into the heavenly places? The cutting off from earth will matter little, if the vanished life is found elsewhere, more flourishing and fruitful than ever it was here.

III. Notice from ver. 16 that THE VERY PURPOSE OF PHARAOH'S EMINENCE IS TO MAKE A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE POWER AND GLORY OF GOD. God did not treat Pharaoh differently from thousands of others, as far as *the essence of his dealing with him is concerned*. All who act as Pharaoh acted will suffer as Pharaoh suffered. He was not a throned puppet, a mere machine in the hands of Divine power; if he had been, no instruction and no warning could be got from him for the guidance of voluntary beings like ourselves. But being a downright selfish, proud, malignant man, God put him in this high position that he might effectually publish both his folly and his doom, and the power and name of that great Being whom he had so pertinaciously defied. He was born a Pharaoh, put in royal prerogative and possessions by no choice of his own, but we may most truly say, by the sovereign disposal of Jehovah. Thousands have been as stubborn against chastisement as he, and have gone down to a destruction as real, even though its circumstances have not been miraculous, imposing and memorable. The difference is that Pharaoh's career was to be known; and not only known, but known as is the course of the sun and the moon, all round the earth. One such career is enough to be recorded in a way so prominent; one capital instance of human folly and weakness and Divine wisdom and power, blazing up like a beacon-fire out of the darkness of that distant past. Little did Pharaoh dream that, by his very perversity and humiliation, he was making a name for himself such as none made who went before or followed him, either in peace or in war. His memory is dragged in a perpetual procession of triumph at Jehovah's chariot-wheels. *And as it is with evil men, so it is with good*. As there have been many of the Pharaoh stubbornness, though only one of the Pharaoh notoriety, so there have been many meek and gentle as Moses, though only Moses has been set for the whole world to gaze upon. It is more important to have Abraham's faith than it is to have Abraham's fame; more important to have the spiritual susceptibilities, experiences and aspirations of David, than the power which could put them into immortal Psalms. A man is not to be reckoned more wicked because the story of his execrable deeds is borne on every wind. A man is not better because he is better known. A few are taken for examples and located in history, as only God in his wisdom is able to locate them. He is a God who presides not only over life, but over biography as well.—Y.

Ver. 13.—*Harden not your hearts*. Our position in considering the dealings of God with men, resembles the position of scholars in some school observing and criticizing the conduct of the master. *Certain inferences cannot be drawn from partial knowledge*. Moreover, God's dealings with us resemble, to some extent, the dealings of a tutor with his scholars. Where intelligent appreciation is impossible through immaturity of intelligence, then action must seem arbitrary, however perfect may be the justification. Consider—

I. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH PHARAOH. We cannot, in this view, separate Pharaoh from the social conditions which shaped his life. Great king as he was, yet, in God's sight, he was but a man with great influence—a man intimately connected with other men whose training and destiny were as important as his own. [*Illustration*: In school—one boy specially influential. The conduct of the master towards him must be regulated by considerations as to what is due to the whole body of scholars. The master must act for the general welfare, without partiality towards any.] Had Pharaoh been the sole occupant of Egypt, he might have been treated differently. As one amongst many, the treatment he received is justified, if it can be shown to have tended to the benefit of the community of which he formed a part. [*Illustration*: Suppose boy in school, bigger and stronger than other scholars, exerting a bad influence, bullying. Teacher will speak to him. Knowing, however, his character, may foresee that speech will irritate, make him more obstinate. Still, speech ignored, must go on to enforce

it by *punishment*, well knowing, all the while, that punishment will increase the obstinacy of the individual recipient. Finally, may have to *expel*; yet, in justice to the rest, only *finally*, seeing that premature expulsion would but weaken his authority.] So God (1) spoke to Pharaoh by Moses (v. 1), then (2) punished him again and again (ix. 14), only (3) finally expelled him; foreseeing all the while that his treatment would but harden the offender, yet persisting in it for the good of others, to strengthen and maintain his own authority (ix. 16).

II. EFFECT ON PHARAOH OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIM. Keeping to illustration, the effect on Pharaoh was just what might have been, and was, anticipated. 1. *Effect of speech*. Warnings and threats alike disregarded. The man so full of his own importance that he would not listen; would not allow the existence of a superior; only irritated; made more obstinate (cf. chapter v.). 2. *Effect of punishment*. Pain inflicted proves power to inflict pain. Pain felt prompts to any action which may bring relief. Hence we find:—(1) Verbal confession, "I have sinned" [just like boy, *feeling* punishment, ready to say anything which may remit the pain]. (2) A hardened heart. The *disposition* was not altered by the infliction. "I have sinned" only meant "I have suffered." Once remove the suffering, and the sufferer showed himself more obdurate than ever. It would have been easy to remove Pharaoh at once; but he occupied an exemplary position, and must, for the sake of others, be treated in an exemplary manner. Expulsion came at last, but God retained him in his position so long as it was needful thereby to teach others his power (ix. 16). Perfectly just to *all*; for even Pharaoh, though his conduct was foreseen, yet had it in his own power to alter it. Hardened like clay beneath the sun's heat, his own self-determination made him like the clay; it might have made him like the snow, in which case his obduracy would have melted.

Apply. Many like Pharaoh, yet *all* do not act as he did under like treatment. (Cf. Jonah iii.; Daniel iv. 31—34.) The same treatment may soften as well as harden. The heart, the self-will, the seat of the mischief—and there is a remedy for that (cf. Ezek. xxxvi.), but not whether we will or no (Heb. iii. 7, 8). Other ways in which hearts are hardened—Pharaoh's by active resistance, others by persistent inattention. [*Illustration*—the disregarded alarm.] So Israel got used to God's dealing with them; so, too often we do (cf. Rom. ii. 4, 5; Ps. xcv. 8).—G.

Vers. 17—35.—*The seventh plague—the hail mingled with fire*. I. CONSIDER THE PLAGUE ITSELF. 1. *God has his "to-morrow"* (ver. 18) *as well as Pharaoh* (ch. viii. 10). Only when Pharaoh's "to-morrow" comes, there comes with it the evidence that he means not what he says. But when God's "to-morrow" comes there is the evidence of his perfect stability, how he settles everything beforehand, even to the very hour. "To-morrow, about this time." A whole twenty-four hours then Pharaoh gets for consideration, although really *he* needs it not, and cannot be expected to profit by it. But as we *see* presently, it is serviceable to protect the right-minded among his people. Perhaps the very period of consideration would make Pharaoh even to despise the prediction. He would say to himself that a hailstorm, however severe, could be lived through, and the damage from it soon made right again. 2. *This plague comes from a new direction*. The heavens join the earth in serving God against Pharaoh. Our minds are at once directed to the opening of the windows of heaven (Gen. vii. 11), and the raining upon Sodom and Gomorrah of brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. But we see at once the great difference between these two visitations and this one. Terrible as it was, it was not destructive as they, nor was it meant to be. God never acts so that obliteration comes instead of chastisement, or chastisement instead of obliteration. He nicely graduates his agencies so as to attain the desired results. And yet, though this plague was not a Sodom experience, it was a sufficiently dreadful one. There was nothing in Egyptian annals to dwarf it. All the power which God has stored up in the atmosphere, and which, by *its wide and minute diffusion*, he makes such a blessing, is now *concentrated* so as to become correspondingly destructive. When man will not obey, God can show the rest of his creation in remarkable obedience. Man is seen becoming more and more repugnant to Divine control, while over against him other things are seen becoming more and more amenable. What an impressive reminder is thus given to us, concerning our departure from God, and the discord that departure has

produced. God sent thunder, and hail, and lightning. Even a slight thunder-storm disturbs the mind, and what a profound commotion of the soul this unequalled storm must have produced. The sound of that thunder, one would think, remained in the ears of those who heard it down to their latest hour. As to the lightning, we know more of its causes than did the Egyptians; but all our science will never rob it of its wonder and terror. Franklin has taken away the mystery of it to our intellects, but God has taken care that its power over our hearts should remain. When flash after flash fills the heavens, the most vulgar and sensual of men is awed out of his sordid composure, at least, for the time.

II. CONSIDER THE REMARKABLE DISCRIMINATION OF GOD IN THIS PLAGUE. 1. *The exemption of Goshen from the storm.* "Where the children of Israel were, there was no hail." This exemption now comes almost as a matter of course. (For though Goshen is not mentioned as exempted from the ravages of the locusts, we may fairly conclude that it was exempted.) How clear it thus becomes to those who receive this miracle of the hail in spirit and in truth, that God has complete power over all the order of the sky, sending rain, snow, hail, as it pleases him, gathering the most dreadful of tempests over one district, and leaving another district that skirted it—perhaps even lay inside of it as an inner circle—perfectly secure. In Goshen they heard the thunder, saw the lightning, marked the fall of the bruising hail-stones, but these things touched them not. Here is the oft quoted *suave mari magno* of Lucretius to perfection. God having thus shown here, as elsewhere, his control of the heavens, it is a rational thing enough to supplicate changes of the weather. We are then supplicating for what is quite possible of attainment, even though it might possibly be better in such things to take humbly and trustfully what God may send. 2. But much more notable here than the exemption of Goshen, is the *discriminating way in which God treats the Egyptian people.* More and more have they been getting the opportunity to discover whence and wherefore these visitations have come on their land. A certain preparation was necessary to give them the power fairly and fully to appreciate the appeal of Jehovah in ver. 19. The very exemptions of Goshen already would have done much to lead them to some perception of the real state of affairs, and all along indeed each wonder had said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." There are some who are deaf, even to thunder, and others to whom the still, small voice speaks in the clearest of tones and the plainest of words concerning all truth and duty. Notice with what wisdom God acted in taking a plague of this sort to discriminate among the Egyptians. They had the chance of sheltering themselves from its worst consequences by a timely attention to his warning. The test was effectual as to who feared the word of Jehovah. All that he wanted was that the fear should lead to belief in the prediction, and action corresponding with the belief. When it becomes needful to exempt Goshen, then assuredly it is also just to give right-minded, open-minded, and prudent Egyptians the chance, if not of exemption, at all events, of relief. They are not all Egypt who are of Egypt, as they are not all Israel who are of Israel. Among the nominal believers there are the worst of infidels; and among the nominal infidels there may be, not, of course, the best of believers, but those whose germinant faith may grow up into the most abundant and glorious fruit-bearing. Notice how this was the experience of the Apostles; they constantly found faith and unbelief side by side (Acts xiii. 42—45; xiv. 1—4; xvii. 4, 12, 34; xix. 8, 9). Nowhere is this stated more impressively and authentically than at the very close of the apostolic story; "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (Acts xxviii. 24). Men themselves are continually making preliminary and unconscious separation between the sheep and the goats.

III. CONSIDER THE FRESH CONFESSION AND PROMISE WHICH THIS PLAGUE AT LAST EXORTS FROM PHARAOH. This confession has a very hopeful appearance upon the surface; but then we suddenly remember how hopeless God himself is of any permanent yielding from Pharaoh, any surrender of his entire nature. Nothing is easier than to say, "I have sinned;" nothing is harder than to say it with right knowledge of what sin is, and deep contrition and humiliation, because of its all-dominating presence in the life. Pharaoh uses strong words here, and there is a great appearance of spontaneity and sincerity, but God is not deceived; and we only need to look into the words to be very quickly undeceived ourselves. Indeed, as we examine Pharaoh's utterance, we find that

by a most effective contrast it shows us how to discern the elements of an adequate and acceptable confession of sin. 1. *Such a confession must have reference to a permanent state of the character.* Sin is not a mere outward act, so that a man may sometimes be sinning, and sometimes not sinning. "I have sinned this time." *This time!* There you have the mark of a mere lip acknowledgment; of one who confounds the mere selfish dangers and discomforts that grow out of sin with sin itself. The right confession therefore, is the word of one who has come to a knowledge of the deep and accursed fountain within, of those reservoirs in the thoughts and intents of the heart whence all particular actions flow. He who rightly confesses knows that it is a life that needs to be cleansed, and not a mere limb that needs to be amputated. 2. *It must be absorbingly personal.* It must occupy in the most imperative fashion all the individual consciousness. If there is any time when, as one may say, it is a man's duty to look on his own things, and not the things of others, it is when he is labouring to get the proper conviction of sin. He is not to lose himself in the crowd; he is to stand out before his own mind's eye—self so unsparingly revealed to self—that nothing less will do to say than, "I am the chief of sinners." For not till a man knows what it is to be the chief of sinners is he in the way of discovering what it is to be the chief of saints "I and my people are wicked," says Pharaoh. It was a false unity; a claim of unity dictated even by pride, for he had become incapable of thinking of his people apart from himself. He calls them one in wickedness, when they were not one; for some had this possibility of goodness at least, that they feared Jehovah enough to follow his counsels (ver. 20). And later, when the mixed multitude went out with Israel (ch. xii. 38), what then became of the boast, "I and my people"? 3. *It must desire the removal of sin itself;* of the guilty conscience, the depraved imagination, the unbrotherly and unneighbourly feelings, the intellect darkened with ignorance and error. Above all, it will desire to have the life reconciled, filial, and serviceable towards God. What is the avoidance of physical suffering and loss, compared with the sweeping away of far more intimate elements of misery? Only when there are such desires in the heart will the word "I have sinned" operate to secure an immediate reversal of the life. Israel said "we have sinned," when they had rebelled against Jehovah because of the distasteful report of the spies. What their confession was worth is seen in the immediate sequel (Num. xiv. 40—45). Balaam said to the angel in the way, "I have sinned," but for all that he did not turn back; he was only too glad to go forward and work for the wages of unrighteousness (Num. xxii. 34). 4. *It must be a confession to God himself,* and not a mere talk to others about God being righteous. All that Pharaoh wanted was to have Moses entreat for the withdrawal of present suffering. The acknowledgment, such as it was, was to Moses and not to Jehovah. Now confessions of this sort are useless. The thing wanted is, not a supplication to possible intercessors, but to the Holy One on high, seen through and above the mediating agent. It is not enough to be brought to a knowledge of Jesus as saving from sin; indeed we may only be deluding ourselves with mere words, except as we gain that glorious part of the salvation which consists in the knowledge of him whom Jesus himself knew so well, and desired, with such earnest desire, to reveal to his disciples also.—Y.

Vers. 13—21. *Mercy in Judgment.*—I. GOD'S PURPOSE IN DEALING WITH THE WICKED BY CHASTISEMENT AND NOT BY JUDGMENT (13—16). God might have desolated the land, and let Israel pass unquestioned through the midst of it. But in Pharaoh and his people the Lord would, by foretold, continued, deepening chastisements, reveal the terror and resistlessness of his power. He would make the heart of the oppressor quail in every age and nation, and stir up the oppressed to hope and prayer. But for this prolonged contest with Pharaoh we should have lacked much that has gone to deepen holy fear of God and trust in him.

II. HOW GOD LEADS UP THE WEAKEST FAITH INTO STRENGTH (20, 21). 1. Warning was given, and those who had merely faith enough to believe that God's word might be kept, had time to save their servants and their cattle. 2. In the after contrast between themselves and those who had despised the warning, faith would spring up into full assurance. The trust we give to God, like the seed we cast into the soil, is given back to us an hundredfold. How God answers the prayer, "Lord increase our faith."—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 27—35.—The plague of hail impressed the Pharaoh more than any previous one. It was the first which had inflicted death on men. It was a most striking and terrible manifestation. It was quite unlike anything which the Egyptians had ever experienced before (vers. 18, 24). It was, by manifest miracle, made to fall on the Egyptians only (ver. 26). Pharaoh was therefore more humbled than ever previously. He acknowledged that he "had sinned" (ver. 27); he added a confession that "Jehovah [alone] was righteous, he and his people wicked" (*ibid.*). And, as twice before, he expressed his willingness to let the Israelites take their departure if the plague were removed (ver. 28). The ultimate results, however, were not any better than before. No sooner had Moses prayed to God, and procured the cessation of the plague, than the king repented of his repentance, "hardened his heart;" and, once more casting his promise to the winds, refused to permit the Israelites to depart (vers. 33—35). His people joined him in this act of obduracy (ver. 34), perhaps thinking that they had now suffered the worst that could befall them.

Ver. 27.—And Pharaoh sent. Compare ch. viii. 8, and 25—28. Pharaoh had been driven to entreat only twice before. I have sinned this time. The meaning is, "I acknowledge this time that I have sinned" (Kalisch, Cook). "I do not any longer maintain that my conduct has been right." The confession is made for the first time, and seems to have been extorted by the terrible nature of the plague, which, instead of passing off, like most storms, continued. The Lord is righteous, etc. Literally, "Jehovah is the Just One; and I and my people are the sinners." The confession seems, at first sight, ample and satisfactory; but there is perhaps some shifting of sin, that was all his own, upon the Egyptian "people," which indicates disingenuousness.

Ver. 28.—Mighty thunderings. Literally, as in the margin, "voices of God." Thunder was regarded by many nations of antiquity as the actual voice of a god. In the Vedic theology, Indra spoke in thunder. The Egyptian view on the subject has not been ascertained.

Ver. 29.—As soon as I am gone out of the city. "The city" is probably Tanis (Zoan). We may gather from the expression of this verse, and again of verse 33, that Moses and Aaron did not live in the city, but in the

country with the other Israelites. When it was necessary for them to have an interview with the king, they sought the city: when their interview was over they quitted it. To obtain for Pharaoh a speedy accomplishment of his wish, Moses undertakes to pray for the removal of the plague as soon as he is outside the city walls. That thou mayest know that the earth is the Lord's. The phrase used is ambiguous. It may mean either "that the earth is Jehovah's," or "that the land (of Egypt) is his." On the whole, perhaps the former rendering is the best. The other plagues sufficiently showed that Egypt was Jehovah's; this, which came from the open heaven that surrounds and embraces the whole world, indicated that the entire earth was his. (Comp. Ps. xxiv. 1: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein.")

Ver. 30.—I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord. True fear of God is shown by obedience to his commands. Pharaoh and his servants had the sort of fear which devils have—"they believed and trembled." But they had not yet that real reverential fear which is joined with love, and has, as its fruit, obedience. So the event showed (See verses 34, 35.)

Vers. 31, 32.—These verses seem out of place, containing, as they do, an account of the damage done by the hail, and being thus exegetical of verse 25. They are a sort of afterthought, inserted parenthetically, and prepare the way for the understanding of the next plague; since, if the damage done by the hail had extended to all the crops, there would have been nothing left for the locusts to devour.

Ver. 31.—The flax and the barley was smitten. Flax was largely cultivated by the Egyptians, who preferred linen garments to any other (Herod. ii. 37), and allowed the priests to wear nothing but linen. Several kinds of flax are mentioned as grown in Egypt (Plin. H. N. xix. 1); and the neighbourhood of Tanis is expressly said to have been one of the places where the flax was produced. The flax is bolled, *i.e.* blossoms towards the end of January or beginning of February, and the barley comes into ear about the same time, being commonly cut in March. Barley was employed largely as the food of horses, and was used also for the manufacture of beer, which was a common Egyptian beverage. A certain quantity was made by the poorer classes into bread.

Ver. 32.—The wheat and the rie were not smitten, for they were not grown up. In Egypt the wheat harvest is at least a month later than the barley harvest, coming in April, whereas the barley harvest is finished

by the end of March. Rye was not grown in Egypt; and it is generally agreed that the Hebrew word here translated "rie" means the *Holcus sorghum*, or *doora*, which is the only grain besides wheat and barley represented on the Egyptian monuments. The *doora* is now raised commonly as an after-crop; but, if sown late in the autumn, it would ripen about the same time as the wheat.

Ver. 33.—The rain was not poured upon the earth. Rain had not been previously mentioned, as it was no part of the plague, that is, it caused no damage. But Moses, recording the cessation as an eye-witness, recollects that rain was mingled with the hail, and that, at his prayer, the thunder, the hail, and the rain all ceased. The touch is one which no later writer would have introduced.

Ver. 34.—He sinned yet more, and hardened his heart. Altogether there are three different Hebrew verbs, which our translators have rendered by "harden," or "hardened"—

kabad, *qashah*, and *khazaq*. The first of these, which occurs in ch. vii. 14: viii. 15, 32; ix. 7 and 34, is the weakest of the three, and means to be "dull" or "heavy," rather than "to be hard." The second, which appears in ch. vii. 3, and xiii. 15, is a stronger term, and means "to be hard," or, in the Hiphil, "to make hard." But the third has the most intensive sense, implying fixed and stubborn resolution. It occurs in ch. iv. 21; vii. 22; viii. 19; ix. 35; and elsewhere. He and his servants. Pharaoh's "servants," i.e. the officers of his court, still, it would seem, upheld the king in his impious and mad course, either out of complaisance, or because they were really not yet convinced of the resistless might of Jehovah. After the eighth plague, we shall find their tone change (ch. x. 7).

Ver. 35.—As the Lord had spoken by Moses. Compare ch. iii. 19; iv. 21; and vii. 3, 4.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 27—30. *The mock repentance of a half-awakened sinner counterfeits the true, but has features by which it may be known.* It is not always easy to distinguish between a true and a mock repentance. Here was the Pharaoh at this time very visibly—he might have seemed deeply-impressed. He was disquieted—he was alarmed—he was ready to humble himself—to make confession—to promise obedience in the future. In what did his repentance differ from true, godly repentance? What points did it possess in common with such penitence? What points did it lack?

I. IT POSSESSED THE FEATURE OF SELF-HUMILIATION. "I have sinned this time—I and my people are wicked." Confession of sin is a very important point in true penitence. There can be no true penitence without it. "I said, I will confess my sin unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin" (Ps. xxxii. 5). But it may be made, under a sort of compulsion, as a necessity, without the rightful feeling of contrition, or sorrow for sin, out of which it should spring, and apart from which it is valueless. We may doubt whether Pharaoh's confession sprang from a true, contrite heart. There was a ring of insincerity in it. "I, and my people," he said, "are wicked." True penitence leads us to confess our own sins, not those of others. There was no occasion for introducing the mention of his people's sins, and, as it were, merging his own in theirs. The people had not been appealed to, in order that they might say whether the Israelites should be allowed to depart or not. They had no doubt many sins of their own to answer for; but they had had no part in this particular sin. There is a covert self-justification in the introduction of the words "and my people," as if the national sentiment had been too strong for him, and he had only "refused to let Israel go" in consequence of it.

II. IT POSSESSED THE FEATURE OF VINDICATING GOD'S HONOUR. "The Lord is righteous," or "Jehovah is the righteous one," was such a full and frank acknowledgment of the perfect justice and righteousness of God as the heart of man does not very readily make, unless in moments of exaltation. We need not suppose that the monarch was insincere in his utterance. He was temporarily lifted up out of himself—so impressed with the power and greatness of Jehovah, that he had for the time true thoughts and high thoughts concerning him. He had doubtless a very insufficient feeling or appreciation of the awful purity and holiness of God; but he did feel his justice. He knew in his inmost heart that he had deserved the judgments sent upon him, and meant to acknowledge this. He was willing that God should be "justified in his sayings, and overcome when He was judged" (Rom. iii. 4). He may not have had an adequate sense of the full meaning of his own words, but he

had some sense of their meaning, and did not merely repeat, parrot-like, phrases from a ritual.

III. IT POSSESSED THE FEATURES OF SELF-DISTRUST AND OF APPEAL TO THE MINISTERS OF GOD FOR AID. Pharaoh "sent and called for Moses and Aaron." Not very long before, he had dismissed them from his presence as impertinent intruders, with the words, "Get you to your burdens" (ch. v. 4). Now he appeals to them for succour. He asks their prayers—"Intreat for me." Such appeals are constantly made, both by the true and by the mock penitent. Reliance on self disappears. God's ministers take their due place as ambassadors for him and stewards of his mysteries. They are asked to intercede for the sinner, to frame a prayer for him, and offer it on his behalf. All this is fitting under the circumstances; for lips long unaccustomed to prayer cannot at once offer it acceptably, and intercessory prayer is especially valuable at the time when the half-awakened soul feels a yearning towards God, to which, if unassisted, it is unable to give effect.

IV. IT POSSESSED THE FEATURE OF MAKING PROMISE OF AMENDMENT. "I will let you go." Let but his prayer be granted, let but the plague be removed, and the king promises that all his opposition to the will of Jehovah shall cease—the children of Israel shall be "let go," they shall not be detained any longer. Amendment of life is the crown and apex of repentance, and is rightly first resolved upon, then professed, finally practised by the true penitent. But profession alone is no criterion of the nature of the repentance. The sole certain criterion is the result. If the resolutions made are kept, if the profession is carried out in act, then the repentance is proved to have been genuine; if the reverse is the case, then it was spurious. The event, however, can alone show how the case stands. Meanwhile, as we must "judge nothing before the time," it would seem to be best that in every case a professed repentance should be treated as real when it is put forward, whatever suspicions may be entertained respecting it. No harm is done by treating a mock penitent as if he were a real one. Great harm might be done by a mistaken rejection of a true penitent.

V. IT LACKED, HOWEVER, THE FEATURE OF INTENSE HATRED OF SIN. The sinner who truly repents desires above all things the pardon and removal of his sin. He cares little, comparatively, for the removal of its chastisement. Sin, which separates him from God, is the great object of his abhorrence; and when he asks the prayers of ministers or other pious persons, he requests them to intercede for him, that he may find pardon and cleansing, may have his past sins forgiven, and strength granted him to forsake sin in the future. When Pharaoh, instead of such a prayer as this, asked for nothing but the removal of the temporal evil which had been sent upon him as a punishment, it was easy for one experienced in the words of man to see that his was not a real, genuine repentance. And this Moses seems to have perceived. "As for thee and thy servants," he said to the king, "I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God." I know that the fear which now fills your hearts is not the true fear of God—not a dread of his displeasure, but of the pains and sufferings that he can inflict. I know that what you seek is not reconciliation with God, but exemption from calamity. You are driven upon your course by alarm and terror, not drawn by love. I know that when the affliction is removed you will relapse into your former condition. Some more terrible judgment will be needed to make you really yield. Note, then, that the minister, if he possesses spiritual discernment, may generally detect an unreal repentance, and, however closely it apes the true, may escape being deceived by it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 22—35.—I. THE TERRORS OF GOD'S MIGHT. In that awful war of elements any moment might have been his last, and Pharaoh trembled. This plague evoked from him the first confession of sin. Hitherto he had reluctantly granted the request of Moses: now he casts himself as a sinner (27, 28) on God's mercy, and entreates the prayers of God's servant for himself and his people. There is a point at which the stoutest heart will be broken, and the cry be wrung from the lips, "I have sinned." "Can thine heart endure," etc. (Ezek. xxii. 14).

II. THE VALUELESSNESS OF REPENTANCE BORN ONLY OF TERROR. God might thus bow all men under him, but the conquest would be worth nothing: men's hearts would

not be won. When the terror is gone, Pharaoh's confession fails (30, 34, 35), for it has no root in any true knowledge of himself. He sees the darkness of God's frown, not the vileness of his transgressions. God is met with, not in the tempest and the fire, but in the still small voice which speaks within the breast. Many pass through gates of terror to hear this; but till God's voice is *heard* there, speaking of sin and righteousness and judgment, there is no true return of the soul to him.

III. THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S MERCY. God knows the worthlessness of the confession, yet he is entreated for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God's pity rests where men will have none upon themselves. Though they believe not, he cannot deny himself.—U.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—20.—THE EIGHTH PLAGUE. Notwithstanding his self-condemnation and acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that had been sent upon him (ch. ix. 27), Pharaoh no sooner found that the seventh plague had ceased than he reverted to his old obstinacy. He both wilfully hardened his own heart (ch. ix. 34); and God, by the unfailing operation of his moral laws, further blunted or hardened it (ch. x. 1). Accordingly, it became necessary that his stubbornness should be punished by one other severe infliction. Locusts, God's "great army," as they are elsewhere called (Joel ii. 25), were the instrument chosen, so that once more the judgment should seem to come from heaven, and that it should be exactly fitted to complete the destruction which the hail had left unaccomplished (ver. 5). Locusts, when they come in full force, are among the most terrible of all the judgments that can befall a country. "A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness" (Joel ii. 3). They destroy every atom of foliage—crops, vegetables, shrubs, trees—even the bark of the fruit-trees suffers—the stems are injured, the smaller branches completely peeled and "made white" (*ibid.* i. 7). When Moses threatened this infliction, his words produced at once a great effect. The officers of the court—"Pharaoh's servants," as they are called—for the first time endeavoured to exert an influence over the king—"Let the men go," they said; "knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (ver. 7). And the king so far yielded that—also for the first time—he let himself be influenced by the mere threat of a judgment. He would have let the Israelites depart, before

the locusts came, if only they would have left their "little ones" behind them (vers. 8—11). Moses, however, could not consent to this limitation; and so the plague came in full severity—the locusts covered the whole face of the earth, so that the land was darkened with them (ver. 15); and all that the hail had left, including the whole of the wheat and *doora* harvests, was destroyed. Then Pharaoh made fresh acknowledgment of his sin, and fresh appeals for intercession—with the old result that the plague was removed, and that he remained as obdurate as ever (vers. 16—20).

Ver. 1.—Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart. The word "I" is expressed in the original and is emphatic. It is not merely that Pharaoh has hardened himself (ch. ix. 34); but I have "dulled" or "hardened" him. Therefore condescend to see him once more, and to bear my message to him. The heart of his servants. Compare ch. ix. 34. As Pharaoh's determination began to waver the influence of the court officers increased. Hence the frequent mention of them in this part of the narrative. That I might shew them my signs. The "fierceness of man" was being "turned to God's praise." It resulted from the obstinacy of Pharaoh that more and greater miracles were wrought, more wonderful signs shown, and that by these means both the Israelites themselves, and the heathen nations in contact with them, were the more deeply impressed.

Ver. 2.—That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son. The Psalms show how after generations dwelt in thought upon the memory of the great deeds done in Egypt and the deliverance wrought there. (See especially Ps. lxxxviii. cv. and cvi; but compare also Ps. lxxvii. 6, 7; lxxvii. 14—20; lxxxii. 5, 6; cxiv. 1—3; cxxxv. 8, 9; cxxxvi. 10—15.)

Ver. 3.—How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself? The confession recorded in ch. ix. 27 had been a distinct act of self-humiliation; but it had been cancelled by subsequent self-assertion (v. 34, 35). And,

moreover, humility of speech was not what God had been for months requiring of Pharaoh, but submission in act. He would not really "humble himself" until he gave the oft-demanded permission to the Israelites, that they might depart from Egypt.

Ver. 4.—To-morrow. Again a warning is given, and a space of time interposed, during which the king may repent and submit himself, if he chooses. The locusts. The species intended is probably either the *Acridium peregrinum* or the *Edipoda migratoria*. Both are common in Arabia and Syria, and both are known in Egypt. They are said to be equally destructive. The Hebrew name, *arbeh*, points to the "multitudinous" character of the visitation. A traveller in Syria says—"It is difficult to express the effect produced on us by the sight of the whole atmosphere filled on all sides and to a great height by an innumerable quantity of these insects, whose flight was slow and uniform, and whose noise resembled that of rain; the sky was darkened, and the light of the sun considerably weakened. In a moment the terraces of the houses, the streets, and all the fields were covered by these insects." (Ollivier, *Voyage dans l'Empire Ottoman*, vol. ii. p. 424.) Into thy coast—i.e. "across thy border, into thy territories." The locust is only an occasional visitant in Egypt, and seems always to arrive from some foreign country.

Ver. 5.—They shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth. This is one of the points most frequently noticed by travellers. "The ground is covered with them for several leagues," says Volney. "The steppes," says Clarke, "were entirely covered by their bodies." "Over an area of 1600 or 1800 square miles," observes Barrow, "the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them." They shall eat the residue of that which escaped. Locusts eat every atom of verdure in the district attacked by them. "In A.D. 1004," says Barhebræus, "a large swarm of locusts appeared in the land of Mosul and Baghdad, and it was very grievous in Shiraz. It left no herb nor even leaf on the trees." "When their swarms appear," writes Volney, "everything green vanishes instantaneously from the fields, as if a curtain were rolled up; the trees and plants stand leafless, and nothing is seen but naked boughs and stalks." And shall eat every tree. The damage done by locusts to trees is very great. "He (the locust) has laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare and east it away; the branches thereof are made white" (Joel i. 7). Travellers constantly notice this fact. "When they have devoured all other vegetables," says one, "they attack the trees, consuming first the leaves, then the bark." "After having consumed herbage, fruit, leaves of trees," says

another, "they attacked even their young shoots and their bark." "They are particularly injurious to the palm-trees," writes a third; "these they strip of every leaf and green particle, the trees remaining like skeletons with bare branches." A fourth notes that "the bushes were eaten quite bare, though the animals could not have been long on the spot. They sat by hundreds on a bush, gnawing the rind and the woody fibres." (See Pusey's *Minor Prophets*, p. 106.)

Ver. 6.—They shall fill thy houses. Compare Joel ii. 9. The witness of modern travellers is to the same effect. Morier says—"They entered the inmost recesses of the houses, were found in every corner, stuck to our clothes, and infested our food" (*Second Journey*, p. 100). Burckhardt observes—"They overwhelm the province of Nedjd sometimes to such a degree that, having destroyed the harvest, they penetrate by thousands into the private dwellings, and devour whatsoever they can find, even the leather of the water vessels" (*Notes*, vol. ii. p. 90). An older traveller, Beauplan, writes as follows:—"In June 1646, at Novgorod, it was prodigious to behold them, because they were hatched there that spring, and being as yet scarce able to fly, the ground was all covered, and the air so full of them that I could not eat in my chamber without a candle, all the houses being full of them, even the stables, barns, chambers, garrets, and cellars. I caused cannon-powder and sulphur to be burnt to expel them, but all to no purpose; for when the door was opened, an infinite number came in, and the others went fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing, when a man went abroad, to be hit on the face by those creatures, on the nose, eyes, or cheeks, so that there was no opening one's mouth but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing; for when we were to eat they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them." Oriental houses, it is to be borne in mind, have no better protection than lattice-work in the windows, so that locusts have free access to the apartments, even when the doors are shut. Which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen. Inroads of locusts are not common in Egypt. Only one reference has been found to them in the native records. When they occur, they are as destructive as elsewhere. Denon witnessed one in the early part of the present century. Two others were witnessed by Carsten Niebuhr and Forskål in 1761 and 1762 (*Description de l'Arabie*, p. 148); and another by Tischendorf comparatively recently. The meaning in the text is probably that no such visitation as that now sent had been seen previously, not that Egypt

had been hitherto free from the scourge. **He** turned himself and went out. Moses did not wait to learn what effect his announcement would have. He "knew" that Pharaoh would not fear the Lord. (See ch. ix. 30.)

Ver. 7.—And Pharaoh's servants said unto him. This marks quite a new phase in the proceedings. Hitherto the courtiers generally had been dumb. Once the magicians had ventured to say—"This is the finger of God" (ch. viii. 19); but otherwise the entire court had been passive, and left the king to himself. They are even said to have "hardened their hearts" like him (ch. ix. 34). But now at last they break their silence and interfere. Having lost most of their cattle, and a large part of the year's crops, the great men became alarmed—they were large landed proprietors, and the destruction of the wheat and *doora* crops would seriously impoverish, if not actually ruin them. Moreover, it is to be noted that they interfere before the plague has begun, when it is simply threatened, which shows that they had come to believe in the power of Moses. Such a belief on the part of some had appeared, when the plague of hail was threatened (ch. ix. 20); now it would seem to have become general. **A snare to us—i.e.** "a peril"—"a source of danger," the species being put for the genus.

Ver. 8.—Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh. Pharaoh did not condescend so far as to send for them, but he allowed his courtiers to bring them to him. And he so far took the advice of his courtiers, that he began by a general permission to the Israelites to take their departure. This concession, however, he almost immediately retracted by a question, which implied that all were not to depart. **Who are they that shall go?** It seems somewhat strange that the king had not yet clearly understood what the demand made of him was. But perhaps he had not cared to know, since he had had no intention of granting it.

Ver. 9.—And Moses said, We will go with our young, and with our old. This statement was at any rate unambiguous, and no doubt could henceforth be even pretended as to what the demand was. The whole nation, with its flocks and herds, was to take its departure, since a feast was to be held in which all the nation ought to participate. The Egyptians were accustomed to the attendance of children at national festivals (Herod. ii. 60).

Ver. 10.—And he said, etc. Pharaoh's reply to the plain statement of Moses is full of scorn and anger, as if he would say—"When was ever so extravagant and outrageous a demand made? How can it be supposed that I would listen to it? So may Jehovah help you, as I will help you in this—to let you go, with your families." (*Taph* is "family," or

household, not "little ones." See Ex. i. 1.) **Look to it; for evil is before you.** Or, "Look to it; for you have evil in view." Beware, i.e., of what you are about. You entertain the evil design of robbing me of my slaves—a design which I shall not allow you to carry out. There is no direct threat, only an indirect one, implied in "Look to it."

Ver. 11.—Go now ye that are men. Or, "ye that are adult males." The word is different from that used in ver. 7, which includes women and children. **And serve the Lord; for that ye did desire.** Pharaoh seems to argue that the request to "serve the Lord" implied the departure of the men only, as if women and children could not offer an acceptable service. But he must have known that women and children attended his own national festivals. (See the comment on ver. 9.) Probably, he knew that his argument was sophistical. **And they were driven out.** Literally, "One drove them out." Pharaoh's manifest displeasure was an indication to the court officials that he wished the interview ended, and as the brothers did not at once voluntarily quit the presence, an officer thrust them out. This was an insult not previously offered them, and shows how Pharaoh's rage increased as he saw more and more clearly that he would have to yield and allow the departure of the entire nation.

Ver. 13.—The Lord brought an east wind. Locusts generally come with a wind; and, indeed, cannot fly far without one. An east wind would in this case have brought them from northern Arabia, which is a tract where they are often bred in large numbers. Debon, the French traveller, notes that an enormous cloud of locusts which invaded Egypt during his stay, came from the east. **All that day.** The rest of the day on which Moses and Aaron had had their interview with the Pharaoh.

Ver. 14.—The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt. This statement is very emphatic, and seems to imply that the plague was more widely extended than any that had preceded it. Egypt extends about 520 miles from north to south, but except in the Delta is not more than about 20 miles wide. Columns of locusts of the length of 500 miles have been noticed by travellers (Moor in Kirby on *Entomology*, letter vi.), and 20 miles is not an unusual width for them. But such a length and such a breadth are not elsewhere recorded in comparison. Thus the visitation was, in its extent as well as in its circumstances, plainly abnormal.

Ver. 15.—The land was darkened. It is not quite clear whether the darkness here spoken of was caused by the locusts when they were still on the wing or after they had settled. It is a fact that the insects come in such dense clouds that while on the wing they

obscure the light of the sun, and turn noonday into twilight. And it is also a fact that with their dull brownish bodies and wings they darken the ground after they have settled. Perhaps it is most probable that this last is the fact noticed. (Compare ver. 5.) All the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. Injury to fruit by the hail had not been expressly mentioned in the account of that plague, though perhaps it may be regarded as implied in the expression—that the hail “brake every tree of the field” (ver. 25). The damage which locusts do to fruit is well known. They devour it with the green crops, the herbage, and the foliage, before setting to work upon the harder materials, as reeds, twigs, and the bark of trees. In Egypt the principal fruits would be figs, pomegranates, mulberries, grapes, olives, peaches, pears, plums, and apples; together with dates, and the produce of the *persea*, and the *nebk* or *sidr*. The fruit of the *nebk* is ripe in March. There remained not any green thing. “It is sufficient,” observes one writer, “if these terrible columns stop half an hour on a spot, for everything growing on it, vines, olive-trees, and corn, to be entirely destroyed. After they have passed, nothing remains but the large branches and the roots, which, being underground, have escaped their voracity.” “Wherever they settle,” says another, “it looks as if fire had burnt up everything.” “The country did not seem to be burnt,” declares a third, “but to be covered with snow, through the whiteness of the trees and the dryness of the herbs.” A fourth sums up his account of the ravages committed by locusts thus—“According to all accounts, wherever the swarms of locusts arrive, the vegetables are entirely consumed and destroyed, appearing as if they had been burnt by fire.”

Ver. 16.—Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste. Literally, as in the margin, “hasted to call for M. and A.” He had made similar appeals before (ch. viii. 8, 25; ix. 27), but never with such haste and urgency. Evidently, the locusts were felt as a severer infliction than any previous one. I have sinned. So, after the plague of hail (ix. 27); but here we have the further acknowledgment, against the Lord your God and against you; “against the Lord,” in disobeying his commands; “against you,” in making you promises and then refusing to keep them (ch. viii. 15, 32; ch. ix. 34, 35).

Ver. 17.—Only this once. Compare Gen. xviii. 32. Pharaoh kept this promise. He

did not ask any more for the removal of a plague. This death only—i.e. “this fatal visitation”—this visitation, which, by producing famine, causes numerous deaths in a nation. Pharaoh feels now, as his courtiers had felt when the plague was first threatened, that “Egypt is destroyed” (ver. 7).

Ver. 18.—He . . . intreated the Lord. Moses complied, though Pharaoh had this time made no distinct promise of releasing the people. He had learnt that no dependence was to be placed on such promises, and that it was idle to exact them. If anything could have touched the dull and hard heart of the king, it would have been the gentleness and magnanimity shown by Moses in uttering no word of reproach, making no conditions, but simply granting his request as soon as it was made, and obtaining the removal of the plague.

Ver. 19.—And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind. Literally, “a very strong sea-wind”—i.e. one which blew from the Mediterranean, and which might, therefore, so far, be north, north-west, or north-east. As it blew the locusts into the “Sea of Weeds,” i.e. the Red Sea, it must have been actually a north-west wind, and so passing obliquely over Egypt, have carried the locusts in a south-easterly direction. Cast them into the Red Sea. Literally, “the Sea of Weeds.” No commentator doubts that the Red Sea is here meant. It seems to have received its Hebrew appellation, *Yam Sûph*, “Sea of Weeds,” either from the quantity of sea-weed which it throws up, or, more probably, from the fact that anciently its north-western recess was connected with a marshy tract extending from the present head of the Gulf of Suez nearly to the Bitter Lakes, in which grew abundant weeds and water-plants. There remained not one locust. The sudden and entire departure of locusts is as remarkable as their coming. “At the hour of prime,” says one writer, “they began to depart, and at midday there was not one remaining.” “A wind from the south-west,” says another, “which had brought them, so completely drove them forwards that not a vestige of them was to be seen two hours afterwards” (Morieux, ‘Second Journey,’ p. 98).

Ver. 20.—But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart. The word used here is the intensive one, *khazog*, instead of the milder *kabod* of ver. 1. Pharaoh’s prolonged obstinacy and impenitence was receiving aggravation by the working of the just laws of God. (See the comment on ch. iv. 21.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—God’s mercies and wondrous works to be kept in perpetual remembrance. Man’s forgetfulness of God’s benefits is one of the saddest features of his existing condition and character. He needs continual urging and exhortation to the duty of remembering them.

I. HE FORGETS ESPECIALLY THOSE BENEFITS WHICH ARE CONSTANT AND CONTINUOUS.

(a) Temporal benefits. Life, strength, health, intellect, the power to act, the capacity to enjoy, the ability to think, speak, write, are God's gifts, bestowed lavishly on the human race, and in civilised countries possessed in some measure by almost every member of the community. And, for the most part, they are possessed continuously. At any moment any one of them might be withdrawn; but, as it pleases God to make them constant, they are scarcely viewed as gifts at all. The Church would have men thank God, at least twice a day, for their "creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." But how few perform this duty! Creation, preservation, daily sustenance, even health, are taken as matters of course, which come to us naturally; not considered to be, as they are, precious gifts bestowed upon us by God.

(b) Spiritual benefits. Atonement, redemption, reconciliation, effected for us once for all by our Lord's death upon the Cross; and pardon, assisting grace, spiritual strength, given us continually, are equally ignored and forgotten. At any rate, the lively sense of them is wanting. Few say, with David, constantly, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Ps. ciii. 1—5).

II. HE FORGETS EVEN EXTRAORDINARY MERCIES. A man escapes with life from an accident that might have been fatal; recovers from an illness in which his life was despaired of; is awakened suddenly to a sense of religion when he had long gone on in coldness and utter deadness; and he thinks at first that nothing can ever take the thought of the blessing which he has received out of his remembrance. He is ready to exclaim, ten times a day, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul!" But soon all fades away and grows dim; the vivid remembrance passes from him; he thinks less and less of what seems now a distant time; he neglects to speak of it, even to his children. Instead of "telling in the ears of his son, and of his son's son, what things God wrought for him in the old time," he does not so much as think of them. Very offensive to God must be this forgetfulness. He works his works of mercy and of power for the very purpose "that men may tell of them and have them in remembrance," may "teach them to their sons and their sons' sons," may keep them "as tokens upon their hands, and as frontlets between their eyes," may "tell them to the following generation."

III. PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE OF EXTRAORDINARY MERCIES IS BEST SECURED BY THE OBSERVANCE OF ANNIVERSARIES. God instituted the Passover, and other Jewish feasts, that the memory of his great mercies to his people in Egypt and the wilderness should not pass away (Ex. xii. 24—27). So the Christian Church has observed Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day. Such occasions are properly called "commemorations." And individuals may well follow the Church, by commemorating important events in their own lives, so they do it—(1) Gratefully; (2) Prayerfully; and (3) Unostentatiously.

Vers. 3—6.—*God's long-suffering towards the wicked has a limit.* "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself?" (ver. 3). "The goodness of God endureth yet daily." His forbearance and long-suffering are wonderful. Yet they have a limit. God will not proceed to judgment—

I. UNTIL THE SINNER HAS HAD FULL OPPORTUNITY FOR REPENTANCE. Pharaoh had been first warned (ch. v. 3), then shown a sign (ch. vii. 10—12); after this, punished by seven distinct plagues, each of which was well calculated to strike terror into the soul, and thereby to stir it to repentance. He had been told by his own magicians that one of them, at any rate, could be ascribed to nothing but "the finger of God" (ch. viii. 19). He had been impressed, alarmed, humbled so far as to make confession of sin (ch. ix. 27), and to promise three several times that he would let the Israelites depart from Egypt (ch. viii. 8, 28; ch. ix. 28). But all had been of no avail. No sooner was a plague removed at his humble entreaty than he resumed all his old pride and arrogance, retracted his promise, and showed himself as stiff-necked as

at the first. The time during which his trial had lasted, and God's patience endured, must have been more than a year—surely ample opportunity!

II. UNTIL IT IS MANIFEST THAT THERE IS NO HOPE THAT HE WILL REPENT. "What could have been done more in my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" God asks in Isaiah (v. 4). And what more could he have done to turn Pharaoh from his evil ways, that he had not done on this occasion? Exhortations, warnings, miracles, light plagues, heavy plagues, had all been tried, and no real, permanent impression made. The worst of all was, that when some kind of impression was made, no good result ensued. Fear—abject, servile, cowardly fear—was the dominant feeling aroused; and even this did not last, but disappeared the moment that the plague was removed. Pharaoh was thus constantly "sinning yet more" (ch. ix. 34). Instead of improving under the chastening hand of God, he was continually growing worse. His heart was becoming harder. His reformation was more hopeless.

III. UNTIL GOD'S PURPOSES IN ALLOWING THE RESISTANCE OF HIS WILL BY THE SINNER ARE ACCOMPLISHED. God intended that through Pharaoh's resistance to his will, and the final failure of his resistance, his own name should be glorified and "declared throughout all the earth" (ch. ix. 16). It required a period of some length—a tolerably prolonged contest—to rivet the attention both of the Egyptians generally, and of the surrounding nations. After somewhat more than a year this result had been attained. There was, consequently, no need of further delay; and the last three plagues, which followed rapidly the one upon the other, were of the nature of judgments.

Ver. 7—11.—*Man's interposition with good advice may come too late.* It is impossible to say what effect the opposition and remonstrances of his nobles and chief officers might not have had upon Pharaoh, if they had been persistently offered from the first. But his magicians had for some time aided and abetted his resistance to God's will, as declared by Moses; and had even used the arts whereof they were masters to make the miracles which Moses wrought seem trifles. And the rest of the Court officials had held their peace, neither actively supporting the monarch, nor opposing him. It was only when the land had been afflicted by seven plagues, and an eighth was impending, that they summoned courage to express disapproval of the king's past conduct, and to recommend a different course. "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? *Let the men go,*" they said. But the advice came too late. Pharaoh had, so to speak, committed himself. He had engaged in a contest from which he could not retire without disgrace. He had become heated and hardened; and, the more the conviction came home to him that he must yield the main demand, the more did it seem to him a point of honour not to grant the whole of what had been asked. But practically, this was the same thing as granting nothing, since Moses would not be content with less than the whole. The interposition of the Court officials was therefore futile. Let those whose position entitles them to offer advice to men in power bear in mind four things—(1) The importance of promptness in bringing their influence to bear; (2) the advantage of taking a consistent line from first to last; (3) the danger of inaction and neutrality; and (4) the necessity of pressing their advice when it has been once given, and of not allowing it to be set aside. If the "servants of Pharaoh" had followed up the interposition recorded in verse 7 by further representations and remonstrances, they would have had some slight chance of producing an effect. But a single isolated remonstrance was valueless.

Vers. 12—15.—*The terribleness of God's severer judgments.* "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Our God is a consuming fire." "If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors" (Ps. vii. 11—13). Every calamity which can visit man is at his disposal. God's punishments are terrible—

I. BECAUSE HE IS OMNIPOTENT. He can smite with a thousand weapons—with all the varieties of physical pain—aches, sores, wounds, boils, nerve affections, inflammation, short breath, imperfect heart action, faintings, palpitations, weakness, cramps, chills, shiverings—with mental sufferings, bad spirits, depression, despondency, grief, anguish, fear, want of brain power, loss of self-control, distaste for exertion, &c.; with

misfortunes—sickness, mutilation, loss of friends, ill-health, bereavement, death. He can accumulate sorrows, reiterate blows, allow no respite, proceed from bad to worse, utterly crush and destroy those who have offended him and made themselves his enemies.

II. BECAUSE HE IS ABSOLUTELY JUST. God's judgments are the outcome of his justice, and therefore most terrible. What have we not deserved at his hands? If, after all his gentle teachings, all his mild persuadings, the preaching of his ministers, the promptings of his Holy Spirit, the warnings furnished by the circumstances of life, the special chastisements sent to evoke repentance, men continue obdurate—what remains but a "fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"? (Heb. x. 27.) If each sin committed is to receive its full, due, and appropriate penalty, what suffering can be sufficient? Even in this life, the vengeance that have overtaken the impenitent, have sometimes been most fearful; what must the full tale be if we take in the consideration of another?

III. BECAUSE HE IS FAITHFUL, AND CANNOT LIE OR REPENT. God in his Word has plainly, clearly, unmistakably, over and over again, declared that the impenitent sinner shall be punished everlastingly. In vain men attempt to escape the manifest force of the words and to turn them to another meaning. As surely as the life of the blessed is never-ending, so is the "death" of the wicked. Vainly says one, that he would willingly give up his hope of everlasting life, if so be that by such sacrifice he could end the eternal sufferings of the lost ones. It is not what man feels, what he thinks he would do, or even what he would actually do, were it in his power, that proves anything; the question is one of fact. God tells us what he is about to do, and he will assuredly do it, whatever we may think or feel. "These (the wicked) shall go into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life everlasting" (Matt. xxv. 46). Oh! terrible voice of most just judgment which shall be pronounced on those to whom it shall be said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41)! The crowning terror of the judgment of God is the perpetuity which he has declared attaches to it.

VERS. 16—20.—*The agency of nature used by God both in inflicting and removing judgments.* God's footsteps are not known. Since Eden was lost to us it has pleased him, for inscrutable reasons, to withdraw himself behind the screen of nature, and to work out his purposes—in the main, through natural agencies. He punishes idleness and imprudence by poverty and contempt; intemperance and uncleanness, by disease; inordinate ambition, by collapse of schemes, loss of battles, deposition, exile, early death. Civil government is one of the agencies which he uses for punishing a whole class of offences; hygienic laws are another. It is comparatively seldom that he descends visibly to judgment, as when he burnt up the cities of the plains. So, even when he was miraculously punishing Egypt and Pharaoh, he used, as far as was possible, the agency of nature. Frogs, mosquitoes, beetles, thunder, hail, locusts, worked his will—natural agents, suited to the season and the country—only known by faith to have come at his bidding, and departed when he gave the order. And he brought the locusts and took them away, by a wind. So the temporal punishments of the wicked came constantly along the ordinary channels of life, rash speculation producing bankruptcy; profligacy, disease; dishonesty, distrust; ill-temper, general aversion. Men curse their ill-luck when calamity comes on them, and attribute to chance what is really the doing of God's retributive hand. The east wind, they say, brought the locusts on them; but they do not ask who brought the east wind out of his treasury. God uses natural means also to remove judgments. "A wind takes the locusts away." A severe winter stops a pestilence. An invasion of their own territory recalls devastating hordes to its defence and frees the land which they were ravaging. Reaction sets in when revolution goes too far, and the guillotine makes short work of the revolutionists. Want stimulates industry, and industry removes the pressure of want. Even when men's prayers are manifestly answered by the cessation of drought, or rain, or the recovery from sickness of one given over by the physicians, the change comes about in a natural way. A little cloud rises up out of the deep, and overspreads the heavens, and the drought is gone. The wind shifts a few points, and the "plague of rain" ceases. The fever abates, little by little, the patient finds that he can take nourishment; so the crisis is past, and

nature, or "the strength of his constitution," as men say, has saved him. The changes are natural ones; but God, who is behind nature, has caused the changes, and, as much as miracles, they are his work.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—A new Message. Even yet God had not done with the King of Egypt. He sends Moses again to ply him with reproof and threatening. The final stroke is put off as long as possible. If "by all means" (1 Cor. ix. 22) Pharaoh can be saved, he will not be lost for want of the opportunity. God tells Moses his *design* in dealing with the monarch as he did, and gives him a new message to carry to the royal presence.

I. GOD'S DESIGN (vers. 1, 2). He had hardened Pharaoh's heart and the heart of his servants, that he might show these his signs before him, and that he might secure their being had in remembrance through all succeeding generations in Israel. This bespeaks, on God's part—1. *Definite purpose in the shaping of the events which culminated in the Exodus.* As Jehovah, the all-ruling one, it lay with him to determine *what* shape these events would assume, so as best to accomplish the end he had in view in the deliverance. It was of his ordering that a ruler of Pharaoh's stamp occupied the throne of Egypt at that particular time; that the king was able to hold out as he did against his often reiterated, and powerfully enforced, command; that the monarch's life was spared, when he might have been smitten and destroyed (ch. ix. 15, 16); that the Exodus was of so glorious and memorable a character. 2. *It indicates the nature of the design.* "That ye may know how that I am the Lord" (ver. 2). We have already seen (ch. vi.) that the central motive in this whole series of events was the manifestation of God in his character of Jehovah—the absolute, all-ruling, omnipotent Lord, who works in history, in mercy, and judgment, for the accomplishment of gracious ends. The design was (1) To demonstrate the *fact* that such a Being as is denoted by the name Jehovah, existed; that there *is* an absolute, all-ruling, omnipotent, gracious God; (2) to raise the mind to a proper conception of his greatness, by giving an exhibition, on a scale of impressive magnitude, of his actual working in mercy and judgment for the salvation of his people; and (3) to make thereby a revelation of himself which would lay the foundation of future covenant relations with Israel, and ultimately of an universal religion reposing on the truths of his unity, spirituality, sanctity, omnipotence, and love. Subordinate objects were the making known of his power and greatness to Pharaoh himself (ch. vii. 17; viii. 22; ix. 13, 29), and to the surrounding nations (ch. ix. 16). The design thus indicated required that the facts should be of a kind which admitted of no dispute; that they should palpably and conclusively demonstrate the character of God to be as asserted; and that they should be of so striking and awful a description, as to print themselves indelibly upon the memory of the nation. These conditions were fulfilled in the events of the Exodus. (3) *It shows how God intended his mighty works to be kept in remembrance.* "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son," &c. (ver. 2). God provided for the handing down of a knowledge of these wonders (1) By giving them a character which *secured* that they should not be forgotten. The memory of these "wonders in the land of Ham" (Ps. cv. 27) rings down in Israel to the latest generations (see Ps. lxxviii.; cv.; cvi.; cxxxv.; cxxvi., &c.); (2) by embodying them in a written record; (3) by enjoining on parents the duty of faithfully narrating them to their children (ch. xiii. 14; Deut. iv. 9; v. 7, 20—23; xi. 19; Ps. lxxviii. 3—7). Bible history will soon get to be forgotten if the story is not taken up and diligently taught by loving parental lips.

II. GOD'S REQUIREMENT—humility. "How long wilt thou refuse to *humble* thyself before me?" (ver. 3.) This lays the finger on the root principle of Pharaoh's opposition, pride. Pride, the undue exaltation of the *ego*, is a hateful quality of character, even as between man and man. How much more, as between man and God! It is described as "the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. iv. 6). Pride puffs the soul up in undue conceit of itself, and leads it to spurn at God's dictation and control. It aims at a false independence. It would wish to be as God. In the worldly spirit it manifests itself as "the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). In the self-righteous spirit it manifests itself as

spiritual pride. It excludes every quality which ought to exist in a soul rightly exercised towards its Creator. Faith, love, humility, the feeling of dependence, gratitude for benefits, regard for the Creator's glory—it shuts out all. It is incompatible with the sense of sin, with the spirit of contrition, with humble acceptance of salvation through atonement. It is the great barrier to the submission of the heart to God and Christ, inciting instead to naked and impious rebellion. The degree and persistency of the opposition to God which pride is able to inspire may be well studied in the case of Pharaoh.

III. GOD'S THREAT (vers. 4-7). He would bring upon the land a plague of locusts. The magnitude of the visitation would place it beyond comparison with anything that had ever been known. See below.

IV. MOSES GOING OUT FROM PHARAOH. "And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh" (ver. 6). He delivered his message, and did not wait for an answer. This should have told Pharaoh that the bow was now stretched to its utmost, and that to strain it further by continued resistance would be to break it. His courtiers seem to have perceived this (ver. 7). Moses' going out was a prelude to the final breaking off of negotiations (ver. 29). View it also as a studied intimation—1. Of his indignation at the past conduct of the king (cf. ch. xi. 8). 2. Of his conviction of the hopelessness of producing any good impression on his hardened nature. 3. Of the certainty of God's purpose being fulfilled, whether Pharaoh willed it or no. It was for Pharaoh's interest to attend to the warning which had now again been given him, but his refusal to attend to it would only injure himself and his people; it would not prevent God's will from being accomplished.—J. O.

Vers. 7-21.—*The plague of locusts.* Of the two principal terms used to denote "hardening," one means "to strengthen, or make firm," the other, "to make heavy, or obtuse." It is the latter of these (used also in ch. viii. 15, 32; ix. 7) which is used in ch. ix. 34, and ch. x. 1. The growing obtuseness of Pharaoh's mind is very apparent from the narrative. He is losing the power of right judgment. He began by hardening himself (making his heart strong and firm) against Jehovah, and he is reaping the penalty in a blinded understanding. This obtuseness shows itself in various ways, notably in the want of unity in his conduct. He is like a man at bay, who feels that he is powerless to resist, but cannot bring himself to yield. His power of self-control is leaving him, and his action, in consequence, consists of a succession of mad rushes, now in one direction, now in another. External influences—the remonstrance of courtiers, the terrors occasioned by the plagues—produce immediate effects upon him; but the recoil of pride and rage, which speedily supervenes, carries him further from reason than ever. Now he is suing in pitiable self-humiliation for forgiveness; again he is furious and unrestrained in his defiance. Passion is usurping the place of reason, and drives him to and fro with ungovernable violence. We are reminded of the heathen saying, "Whom the gods wish to destroy, they first madden;" but it is not God who is destroying Pharaoh; it is Pharaoh who is destroying himself. If God maddens him, it is by plying him with the influences which ought to have had a directly opposite effect. Pharaoh, like every other sinner, must bear the responsibility of his own ruin.

I. THE INTERVENTION OF PHARAOH'S SERVANTS (ver. 7). These may be the same servants who up to this time had hardened themselves (ch. ix. 34). If so, they now see the folly of further contest. More and more Pharaoh is being left to stand alone. First, his magicians gave in (ch. viii. 19), then a portion of his servants (ch. ix. 20); now, apparently, his courtiers are deserting him in a body. It shows the indomitable stubbornness of the king, that under these circumstances he should still hold out. Observe, 1. The subjects of a government have often a truer perception of what is needed for the safety of a country than their rulers and leaders. Pharaoh's servants saw the full gravity of the situation, to which the monarch was so blind. "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" Rulers are frequently blinded by their pride, passion, prejudices, and private wishes, to the real necessities of a political situation. 2. Hardening against God makes the heart indifferent to the interests of others. The ungodly mind is at bottom selfish. We have seen already (ch. v.) to what lengths in cruelty ungodly men will go in pursuit of their personal ends. We have also seen that hardening at the centre of the nature is bound to spread till it embraces the whole

man (on ch. vii. 3). Pharaoh is an illustration of this. He was unboundedly proud; and "pride," says Müller, "is the basest and most glaring form that selfishness can assume." It is an egoistic sin; a sin of the will more than of the affections; a sin rooted in the centre of the personality. But Pharaoh was more than proud; he was God-defying. He had consciously and wilfully hardened himself against the Almighty, under most terrible displays of his omnipotence. Driven to bay in such a contest, it was not to be expected that he would be much influenced by the thought of the suffering he was bringing upon others. Egypt might be destroyed, but Pharaoh recked little of that, or, possibly, still tried to persuade himself that the worst might be averted. The remonstrance of his courtiers produced a momentary wavering, but defiance breaks out again in ver. 10 in stronger terms than ever.

II. A RENEWED ATTEMPT AT COMPROMISE (vers. 8—12). Pharaoh sends for Moses and Aaron, and asks who they are that are to go to sacrifice (ver. 8): the reply was decisive; "we will go with our young and with our old," etc. (ver. 9). At this Pharaoh is transported with ungovernable rage. He accuses the Hebrew brothers of desiring to take an evil advantage of his permission, and practically challenges Jehovah to do his worst against him (ver. 10). He will consent to the *men* going to serve the Lord, but to nothing more (ver. 11). Moses and Aaron were then "driven" from his presence. We are reminded here of the transports of Saul, and his malicious rage at David (1 Sam. xix.). Notice on this, 1. Wicked men *distrust* God. Pharaoh had no reason to question Jehovah's sincerity. God had proved his sincerity by his previous dealings with him. And had God actually demanded—what ultimately *would* have been required—the entire departure of the people from the land, what right had he, their oppressor, to object? 2. Wicked men would fain *compound* with God. They will give up something, if God will let them retain the rest. There is a sweetness to a proud nature in being able to get even *part* of its own way. 3. The thing wicked men will *not* do is to concede the *whole* demand which God makes on them. What God requires supremely is the surrender of the will, and this the recalcitrant heart will not stoop to yield. Part it will surrender, but not the whole. Outward vices, pleasures, worldly possessions, friendships, these, at a pinch, may be given up; but not the heart's love and obedience, which is the thing chiefly asked for; not the "little ones" of the heart's secret sins, or the "flocks and herds" for the pure inward sacrifice (see Pusey on Micah vi. 6—9).

III. THE LOCUST JUDGMENT (ver. 12—16). The predicted plague was accordingly brought upon the land. It was the second of what we may call the greater plagues—the plagues that were to be laid upon the king's "heart" (ch. ix. 14). They were plagues of a character to *appal* and *overwhelm*; to lay hold of the nature on the side on which it is susceptible of impressions from the awful and terrific; to awaken into intense activity its slumbering sense of the infinite; to rouse in the soul the apprehension of present Deity. The first was the plague of hail, thunderings, and lightnings; the second was this plague of locusts. The points on which stress is laid in this second plague are—1. The supernatural character of the visitation. 2. The appalling numbers of the enemy. 3. The havoc wrought by them. We may compare the language here with the description of the locusts in Joel ii., and it may be concluded that the effects described as following from the latter visitation were more than paralleled by the terror and anguish created by the descent of this scourge on Egypt. "Before their face the people would be much pained; all faces would gather blackness" (Joel ii. 6). It would seem as if the earth quaked before them; as if the heavens trembled; as if sun and moon had become dark, and the stars had withdrawn their shining (ver. 10)! The devastation was rapid and complete. "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness" (ver. 3). Had the plague not speedily been removed Egypt verily *would* have been destroyed. How mighty is Jehovah! How universal his empire! These locusts were brought from afar (ver. 13). All agents in nature serve him; winds (east and west), locusts (cf. Joel ii. 11), as well as hail and thunder. He has but to speak the word, and all we have *will* be taken from us (ver. 15).

IV. PHARAOH'S PITIALE FLIGHT AND FURTHER HARDENING (vers. 16—21). What we have here is a specimen of one of those violent contrasts in Pharaoh's later moods to which reference has been made above. Nothing could be more humiliating, more abject, more truly painful, in its self-effacement than this new appeal of the king to Moses.

He had sinned, sinned both against God, and against Moses and Aaron; would they forgive him this once, only this once, and entreat God that he would take away from him this death only? (vers. 16, 17.) Contrast this with ver. 10, or with ver. 28, and it can hardly be believed that we are looking on the same man. Pharaoh had never humbled himself so far before. He *beseeches* for mercy; almost *cringes* before Moses and Aaron in his anxiety to have this dreadful plague removed. Yet there is no real change of heart. The moment the locusts are gone pride reasserts its sway, and he hardens himself as formerly. Learn—1. That *false repentance may be connected with other than superficial states of feeling*. Pharaoh was here in real terror, in mortal anguish of spirit. The pains of hell had truly got hold on him (Ps. cxvi. 3). Yet his repentance was a false one. 2. That *false repentance may be every outward symptom of real repentance*. Who that saw Pharaoh in that bath of anguish, and heard him pouring out those impassioned entreaties and confessions, but would have supposed that the hard heart had at length been subdued? The confession of sin is unreserved and unqualified. The submission is absolute. Pharaoh was aware of how little he deserved to be further trusted, and pled to be tried again, "only this once." Yet the repentance was through and through a false one—the product of mere natural terror—the repentance of a heart, not one fibre of which was altered in its moral quality. 3. That *false repentance may not be consciously insincere*. There is no reason to question that Pharaoh was for the time sincere enough in the promises he made. They were wrung from him, but he *meant* to give effect to them. But the momentary willingness he felt to purchase exemption from trouble by granting Jehovah's demand had quite disappeared by the time the plague was removed. The repentance was false. 4. *The test of a repentance being false or true is the fruits yielded by it*. The test is not the depth of our convictions, the anguish of our minds, the profuseness of our confessions, the apparent sincerity of our vows, it is the kind of deeds which follow (Matt. iii. 8). We have need in this matter of repentance to distrust ourselves, to beware of being imposed on by others, and to be careful in public instruction that the real nature of repentance is lucidly expounded.—J. O.

Vers. 1-19.—*The Eighth Plague: the locusts*. I. CONSIDER THE EMPHATIC STATEMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE HARDENING OF THE HEART. In ch. ix. 34 we are told that when the hail and the thunder ceased, Pharaoh hardened his heart, *he and his servants*. Note here two things: 1. How Pharaoh's heart was hardened just after he had made a confession of sin; from which we see how little he understood by the word "sin," and how little he meant by the confession. 2. The combination of his servants with him in this hardening; from which we may judge that just as some among his servants had been taken further away from him by their prudent and believing action when the hail was threatened (ch. ix. 20), so others had been drawn still nearer to their master, and made larger sharers in his obstinacy and pride. The unbelieving, who left their servants and their cattle in the fields, not only lost their property when the hail descended, but afterwards they became worse men. And now in ch. x. 1, not only is there a statement that the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants were hardened, but God in his own person says, "I have hardened his heart," &c. Then after this statement, so emphatic in the expression of it, however difficult to understand in the meaning of it, God goes on to explain why he has thus hardened the heart of Pharaoh and his servants. In the first place, *it gives an opportunity for showing God's signs before Pharaoh*—"all my plagues" (ch. ix. 14). Thus God would turn our attention here to the thing of chief importance, namely, *what he was doing himself*. Important it certainly is to notice what *Pharaoh* is doing, but far more important to notice what *Jehovah* is doing. We may easily give too much time to thinking of Pharaoh, and too little to thinking of Jehovah. Thus God would ever direct us into the steps of practical wisdom. We are constantly tempted to ask questions which cannot be answered, while we as constantly neglect to ask questions which both can be answered and ought to be answered. The conduct of Pharaoh is indeed a fascinating problem for those who love to consider the play of motives in the human heart. In considering him there is ample room for the imagination to work out the conception of a very impressive character. Thus, we might come to many conclusions with respect to Pharaoh, some of them right, but in all likelihood most of them wrong, perhaps

egregiously wrong. These are matters in which God has not given opportunity for knowledge; the depths of Pharaoh's personality are concealed from us. *There is true and important knowledge to be gained, but it is in another direction.* The marvellous, exhaustless power of God is to be more prominent in our thoughts than the erratic and violent plunging of Pharaoh from one extreme to another. Amid all that is dark, densely dark, one thing is clear—and clear because God meant it to be clear, and took care to make it so—namely, that all this conduct of Pharaoh was the occasion for unmistakable and multiplied signs of the power of God. One is here reminded of the question of the disciples to Jesus (John ix. 2), "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" To this question more answers than one were possible; but Jesus gave the answer that was appropriate to the occasion. The man was born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him. So not only was Pharaoh's heart hardened, but God himself hardened that heart, in order that these signs might be shown before him. Then, in the second place, *these signs being wrought before Pharaoh, became also matters for consideration, recollection, and tradition to the Israelites themselves.* Moses, taken as the representative of Israel, is to tell to his son, and to his son's son, what things God had done in Egypt. Here is ample occasion given for the observant and devout in Israel to note the doings of Jehovah and communicate them with all earnestness and reverence from age to age. Surely it was worth a little waiting, a little temporal suffering, to have such chapters written as these which record Israel's experiences in Egypt! What are the sufferings, *merely in body and in circumstances*, of one generation, compared with the ennobling thoughts of God, and the consequent inspiration and comfort which may through these very sufferings be transmitted to many generations following! Why it is even a great privilege for one generation to be poor, that through its poverty many generations may become rich.

II. CONSIDER HOW THE TERRIBLE MAGNITUDE OF THE LOCUST-PLAGUE IS SHOWN BY THE EFFECTS FOLLOWING ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF IT. 1. *There are the expostulations of Pharaoh's servants with him* (ver. 7). They, at all events, are not disposed to wait for the coming of the locusts. That the locust-plague was a very dreadful one, we may partly gather from other intimations in the Scriptures with respect to these voracious insects, advancing in their innumerable hosts (Deut. xxviii. 38, 42; 1 Kings viii. 37; 2 Chron. vii. 13; Joel i. 4; Nah. iii. 15). The experiences of modern travellers in the East are also such as to assure us that the expectation of a visit from the locust is enough to excite the most alarming thoughts (see in particular Dr. Thomson's observations on the locust in *The Land and the Book*). But in truth we hardly need to go beyond the conduct of Pharaoh's servants themselves. The very name locust was enough to startle them into precautionary activity; they did not wait for the reality. Some of them, indeed, had anticipated the destructive effect of the hail, and taken suitable precautions; but others felt there was room for question whether, after all, the hail would be so pernicious. In their presumption they guessed that a hailstorm could inflict only a slight and reparable damage. *But what could escape the locusts?* Every green thing was well known to perish before their voracity. Even what might be called an ordinary visitation from them would be no trifle; how much more such a visitation as Pharaoh's servants had now every reason to believe would come upon them! For the time was long past when they doubted concerning the power of Moses to bring what he threatened. It is no longer a question of the power of Moses, but of the endurance of Egypt. In all likelihood the thought now prevailing in the minds of Pharaoh's servants—possibly in Pharaoh's own mind—was that this run of calamity would presently come to an end, if only it was patiently endured. For in ancient Egypt there was doubtless some such proverb as might be Englished into our common saying, "It is a long lane that has no turning." Egypt has known the long lane of seven plagues; surely it cannot be much longer. And yet it may easily be long enough to destroy them before they get out of it. Locusts to come, when Moses speaks about them, may be reckoned as good as come, if something be not done promptly to avert their approach; and once come, then how long will the food of Egypt remain, either for man or beast! No wonder, then, that Pharaoh's servants turned upon him with such warm—one may almost say threatening—expostulations. The prospect of an immediate and almost instantaneous stoppage of supplies was enough to bring them

hastening, as with one consent, to beg a timely submission from their master. 2. *There is the extraordinary yielding of Pharaoh to these expostulations.* Nothing less than extraordinary can it be called. His yieldings hitherto have been under actual chastisement. He has waited for the blow to be struck before he begged for mercy. But now, upon the mere threatening of the blow, he is moved to make overtures of submission. We shall have to notice of what a partial and worthless sort this submission was; at present, the main thing to mark is that there was a submission at all. He could not afford to trifle with the warnings of his servants. Hitherto, in all probability, they had been largely flatterers, men who fooled Pharaoh to the top of his bent with compliments as to his absolute power; but now they are turned into speakers of plain and bitter truth; and though Pharaoh may not like it, the very fact that he is thus addressed is enough to show him that he must arrange terms of surrender before another battle has even begun. Thus, by merely studying the conduct of Pharaoh and his servants before the locusts came, we see very clearly what a terrible plague they were. The plague of the locusts was a great deal more than a variation from the plagues of the frogs, the gnats and the flies.

III. Consider how, in spite of all the dread inspired by the thought of these locusts, PHARAOH'S PRIDE STILL HINDERS COMPLETE SUBMISSION. It was in an emergency of his government, and under pressure from his panic-stricken servants, that he consented to treat with Moses. Moses comes, and Pharaoh makes him an offer, which Moses of course cannot accept, seeing that he really has no power to treat; he has but the one unchangeable demand; it is a righteous demand, and therefore the righteous Jehovah cannot permit it to be diminished. But the rejection of Pharaoh's offer gives him a convenient loophole of escape into his former stubbornness. He can turn to his servants and say, "See what an unreasonable man this is. He comes expecting that in the terms of peace I am to yield all, and he is to yield nothing. Better to risk the locusts, and if need be, perish in the midst of our desolated fields, than live dishonoured by yielding up all Israel at his inexorable request." Speaking in some such spirit as this, we may well believe that Pharaoh stirred up his servants, and won them to support him in continuing his dogged resistance. It is a noble principle to die with honour rather than live with shame; it is the very principle that in its holiest illustration has crowded the ranks of Christian martyrdom. But when a principle of this sort gets into the mouth of a Pharaoh, he may so pervert it as to bring about the worst results. There is no manlier way of closing life than to die for truth and Christ; but it is a poor thing to become, as Pharaoh evidently would have his servants become, the victims of a degraded patriotism. It was all very well to talk loud and drive Moses and Aaron from his presence; but what was the good? the locusts were coming none the less. The fact is, that all suggestions of prudent and timely surrender were cast to the winds. The pride of the tyrant is touched, and it makes him blind to everything else. He rushes ahead, reckless of what may come on *the morrow*, if only he can gain the passionate satisfaction of driving Moses out of his presence *to-day*. There is no reasoning with a man in a passion; all arguments are alike to him.

IV. CONSIDER PHARAOH'S ULTIMATE SUBMISSION AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF IT. He drove Moses and Aaron out of his presence, but nevertheless he had to yield, and that in a peculiarly humiliating way. When he saw the locusts actually at work, then he came face to face with reality; and reality sobers a man. He had to send in haste for the men whom he had driven away, for the locusts were in haste. Every minute he delayed brought Egypt nearer and nearer to starvation. Oh, foolish Pharaoh! just for the pleasure, the sweet, momentary pleasure of driving Moses out of your presence, to risk the horrors of this ravaging host. Notice further, for it is a remarkable thing, that *while Pharaoh begs most humbly for mercy, he makes no formal promise of liberation.* The promise, we feel, was really there, all the more emphatic and more evidently unconditional, just because unspoken. Any way, the time had come when formal promises from Pharaoh mattered little, seeing they were never kept. The great thing was that he should be made to feel the pressure of God's hand upon him, so that he could not but cry to escape from it. Every time he thus cried and begged, as he here so piteously does—all his stubbornness for the time melted away into invisibility—he showed in the clearest manner the power of Jehovah. Jehovah's end, in this particular plague of the locusts, was gained when Pharaoh begged that they might be driven away—Y

Ver. 2.—*The tales of a grandfather.*—Jehovah tells Moses, as the representative of Israel, that these glorious Divine actions in Egypt are to be matters of careful instruction in after ages. Each parent is to speak of them to his children, and each grandparent to his grandchildren. And is there not something particularly suggestive in this expression, “thy son’s son”? It brings before us the aged Israelite, his own part in the toil and strife of the world accomplished, his strength exhausted, the scene of his occupations left to a younger generation, and he himself quietly waiting for the close. How is he to occupy his time? Not in utter idleness, for that is good for no man, however long and hard he may have worked. Some part of his thoughts, it may be hoped, goes out in anticipations of the full and unmixed eternity now so near; but some part also will go backward into time, not without pensive and painful interest. He looks from the eminence he has attained, and two generations are behind him, his children and his children’s children. His own children are busy. The world is with them constantly, and its demands are very pressing. They hardly see their offspring from Monday morning till Saturday night. It is only too easy for a man to get so absorbed in seeking the good of strangers, as to have no time for his own household. The following extract from the biography of Wilberforce bears in a very instructive way on this point. “It is said that his children seldom got a quiet minute with him during the sitting of Parliament. So long as they were infants he had not time to seek amusement from them. Even whilst they were of this age, it made a deep impression on his mind when, one of them beginning to cry as he took him up, the nurse said naturally, by way of explanation, ‘He always is afraid of strangers.’” And if this danger of distance between him and his children came to a man like Wilberforce, we may be sure that it comes to thousands who are less sensitive and conscientious than he was. What a field of usefulness, then, is here indicated for a grandfather! In his retirement, and out of his long experience, he may speak of principles the soundness of which he has amply established, and errors which he has had painfully to correct; he may point to a rich harvest gathered from good seed he has been able to sow. Thus the grandfather finds opportunities for useful instruction which the father, alas! may not even seek. Of such it may be truly said, “They shall bring forth fruit in old age” (Ps. xcii. 14). Notice here two points:—

I. IT IS WELL FOR THE YOUNGER TO LOOK FORWARD WITH CONCERN TO THE OCCUPATIONS OF A POSSIBLE OLD AGE. The very fact that life is uncertain dictates the prudence of a consideration like this. Life may be shorter than we expect it to be, but it may also be longer. We must not reckon on old age, but that is no reason why we should not prepare for it. Boys and girls can hardly be expected to look so far ahead; but those who have come to manhood and womanhood and some exercise of reflective power, may well ask the question, “How shall I occupy old age if it comes?” And surely it is much to remember that if each stage in life is occupied as it ought to be, then this very fidelity and carefulness will help to provide congenial occupation for the last stage of all. Who would wish to spend the closing years of life in such stupor and lethargy as come over only too many, when there are sources of interest and usefulness such as Jehovah indicates to Moses here? Old age might be a brighter and more profitable scene than it usually is. Who can tell, indeed, whether much of the physical prostration, pain, and sensitive decay, which belong to the aged and tend to shut them out from the world, might not be spared, if there were but a wiser life in earlier years, a life spent in obedience to the laws which God has given for life. Many of the most important of these laws we either misunderstand or ignore altogether. Old age is a season into which we should not drift, but advance with a calm consideration of what we may be able to do in it, for the glory of God and the good of men. *If we live to be old, what are our reminiscences to be?* You who are on the climbing side of life, ask yourselves what sort of life you are making, what chapters of autobiography you may hereafter be able to write. Can anything be sadder than some autobiographies and reminiscences? There are such books, sad with expressed sadness, where the vanity of life is confessed and bewailed on every page. But there are other books, far sadder even than the former sort, just because of the very satisfaction with life which they contain. The men who have written them seem to look back in much the same spirit as once they looked forward. They looked forward with all the eagerness and enjoying power of youth, and they look back without having discovered how selfish,

frivolous and unworthy their lives have been. At eighty they are as well pleased with their notion that man has come into this world to enjoy himself as they were at eighteen. Whether we shall live into old age is not for us to settle, nor what our state of body and circumstances may be if we do so live. But one thing at all events we may seek to avoid, namely, a state of mind in old age such as that in which Wesley tells us he found a certain old man at Okehampton. "Our landlord here informed us that he was upwards of ninety, yet had not lost either his sight, hearing, or teeth. Nor had he found that for which he was born. Indeed he did not seem to have any more thought about it than a child of six years old."

II. OBSERVE, CONCERNING WHAT THINGS IN PARTICULAR GOD WOULD HAVE THE OLD SPEAK TO THE YOUNG. Not so much concerning what *they* have done, but concerning what *God has done for them*. Every old man, however foolish, blundering and wasted his own career may have been, has this resort—that he can look back on the dealings of God. It may be that he has to think of a late repentance on his own part; it may be that he has to think a great deal more of God's mercy to him after years of utter negligence, than God's help to him through years of struggling obedience. Even so, he can magnify God most abundantly and instructively. Magnifying God is the thing which all Christians should aim at when they look back on the time covered by their own individual life, or over that long, large tract through which authentic history extends. "Tell what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them." There will never be lack of voices to celebrate the achievements of men. But what a grand occupation for the aged Christian to turn the thoughts of children to the achievements of God, such works as the overthrow of Pharaoh and the guiding into Canaan, and, above all, the work which he does in the hearts of those who believe in his Son. To look on the works of men, on all their selfishness and rivalry, to see how the success of the few involves the failure of the many—all this is very humiliating. But how glorious to speak of the works of God, to point him out in Creation, in Providence, in Redemption; and then to call on the young, all their life through, to be fellow-labourers together with him—what an occupation is here suggested for old age! The "grey-headed and very aged men" (Job xv. 10) may thus do much for us. When Boaz became the nourisher of Naomi's grey hairs, Naomi took the child of Boaz and Ruth, laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And surely her nursing would include instruction, the telling of her own personal experiences to the growing Obed, full as these experiences were of things fitted to guide the youth to a good and noble manhood. A friend who called on C. M. Young, the celebrated actor, a few months before his death, reported that he gave a miserable account of himself, and wound up by saying, "Seventy-nine is telling its tale." True! Seventy-nine must tell a tale of exhausted physical energy, but the tale need not therefore be altogether doleful. Serious it must be, and not without touches of shame; but it will be the fault of the teller if it does not contain much to guide, inspire, and invigorate the young. (Job xxxii. 9; Ps. xxxvii. 25; Titus ii. 2—5; 1 Kings xii. 6—8).—Y.

Vers. 1—11.—*God's Judgments on sin and their results for the righteous and the wicked.* I. THE FRUITS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE OF HIS JUDGMENTS UPON HIS ENEMIES. 1. The plagues of Egypt were to be an example to all the generations of Israel (ver. 2). (1) It drew them nearer God. They were his: he gave Egypt for them. (2) It deepened their trust and fear. 2. It was the prophecy of how God will sanctify his people in the latter days. 3. How God sanctifies his people now. Their prolonged waiting and suffering is storing up power for the future. The night of trial makes the day of deliverance brighter and more fruitful.

II. THE WAY OF THE UNREPENTANT IS ONE OF DEEPENING LOSS. Pharaoh will not retain what God's mercy has left him. The locusts eat what the hail has spared. The path darkens evermore till the night falls to which no day succeeds.

III. GOD'S JUDGMENTS AWAKEN FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS, BUT NO REPENTANCE. The advice of Pharaoh's counsellors. 1. Its selfishness. It was inspired not by love of righteousness, but by self interest. If it does not answer to enslave and persecute God's people; the world will desist; and if there is wealth and honour to be got by it, they will even favour them and desire to be numbered with them. 2. Its insufficiency. "Let the men go." They will not yield the whole of

what God demands. They will not give up sin or resign the heart. The service of the selfish is as deficient in full obedience, as it is hateful in motive.

Vers. 12—20.—*The plague of locusts.* I. GOD'S JUDGMENT. 1. Though restrained for a time, it will surely fall. It is no argument that the threatening is vain, because, while the servants of God try to persuade, there is no token of the coming judgment. 2. When it does come, it is not less than was foretold (14, 15). God's deed is his comment on his Word, and reveals the terror whose shadow lay in it. The flood was not less than Noah's warnings painted it, nor Jerusalem's judgment than the prophecies which predicted it. Nor shall the woes coming upon the nations, nor the end of sin, be less than God's Word has said.

II. PHARAOH'S CRY. It was sincere, both in confession and entreaty. He saw his folly, he desired relief, he purposed amendment. Good visits him, but it will not abide with him. The self-delusion of repentance born of the visitation of God and the need of heart-searching.

III. PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENED THROUGH DELIVERANCE. With the outward blessing we need inward grace. If we wait upon the Lord he will increase fear, and zeal, and tenderness of heart, but if we still keep far from him we are reserved only for heavier punishment. Instead of forsaking evil we shall build upon God's readiness to forgive, and repentance itself will become impossible through the soul's deep insincerity. Have we received no warnings which have been forgotten? Have we made no vows as yet unfulfilled? God's word says, "Flee from the wrath to come." Sin cries, "Tarry, there is no danger; wait for a more convenient season."—U.

EXPOSITION

Vers. 21—29.—**THE NINTH PLAGUE.** The ninth plague, like the third and the sixth, was inflicted without special warning. God had announced, after the plague of boils, that he was about to "send all his plagues upon the heart" of the king; and so a succession of inflictions was to be expected. The ninth plague probably followed the eighth after a very short interval. It is rightly regarded as an aggravation of a well-known natural phenomenon—the Khamsin, or "Wind of the Desert," which commonly visits Egypt about the time of the vernal equinox, and is accompanied by an awful and weird darkness. This is caused by the dense clouds of fine sand which the wind brings with it, which intercept the sun's light, and produce a darkness beyond that of our worst fogs, and compared by some travellers to "the most gloomy night." The wind is depressing and annoying to an extreme degree. "While it lasts no man rises from his place; men and beasts hide themselves; the inhabitants of towns and villages shut themselves up in their houses, in underground apartments, or vaults." It usually blows for a space of two, or at most three, days, and sometimes with great violence, though more often with only moderate force. The visitation here recorded was peculiar, 1. In

its extent, covering as it did "all the land of Egypt;" 2. In its intensity—"they saw not one another" (ver. 23)—"darkness which may be felt" (ver. 21); 3. In its circumscription, extending, as it did, to all Egypt except only the land of Goshen (ver. 23). These circumstances made Pharaoh at once recognise its heaven-sent character, and request its removal of Moses, whom he sought to persuade by conceding the departure of the Israelites with their families. He marred, however, the whole grace of this concession by a proviso that they should leave behind them their flocks and herds, viewing these as, equally with their families, a security for their return. Moses therefore indignantly rejected his offer—the flocks and the herds should go with them—he would not have a hoof left behind—they did not know what sacrifices would be required at the feast which they were about to keep, or how many (ver. 25, 26)—therefore they must take all. Pharaoh, greatly angered, forthwith broke up the conference (ver. 28), but not, as it would seem, before Moses, equally displeased, had announced the tenth plague, and the results which would follow it (ch. xi. 4—8).

Ver. 21.—Darkness which may be felt. Literally, "and one shall feel, or grasp, dark-

ness." The hyperbole is no doubt extreme; but the general sentiment of mankind has approved the phrase, which exactly expresses what men feel in absolute and complete darkness. Kalisch renders, "a darkness in which men grope." But the grammatical construction does not allow of this.

Ver. 22.—**A thick darkness.**—Literally, "An obscurity of darkness." The phrase is intensive.

Ver. 23.—**They saw not one another.** Or, "Man did not see his brother." The descriptive phrases previously used are poetic, and might imply many different degrees of obscurity. This seems distinctly to shew that pitch darkness is meant. Such absolute obscurity is far beyond anything which the *khamzin* produces, even when it is most severe, and indicates the miraculous character of the visitation. Neither rose any from his place for three days. It is not meant that no one moved about his house, but that no one quitted it. (Compare ch. xvi. 29, where the phrase used is similar.) No one went out into the unnatural darkness out of doors, which he dreaded. All stayed at home, and did what they had to do by the artificial light of lamps or torches. All the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. It is not explained how this was effected. Some suppose that the sand-storm did not extend to the land of Goshen. But in that case, such Egyptians as lived among the Israelites—their neighbours (ch. xi. 2)—would have shared the benefit, which seems not to have been the case. I should rather suppose that the storm was general, and that the Israelites were supplied with a light, not that of the sun, by miracle.

Ver. 24.—**Only let your flocks and your herds be stayed.** The pitch darkness is more than Pharaoh can bear. On the third day of its duration probably, he sends a messenger who succeeds in finding Moses, and conducting him to the monarch's presence. He has made up his mind to yield another point—that on which he insisted so strongly at the last interview (vers. 10, 11)—he will let the Israelites go *with their families*—only, their flocks and herds must remain behind. This will be, he considers, a sufficient security for their return; since without cattle they would be unable to support life for many days in the wilderness. Your little ones. Rather, "your families."

Ver. 25, 26.—Moses absolutely refuses the

suggested compromise. He had already declared on a former occasion, "With our young and with our old we will go; with our sons and with our daughters, *with our flocks and with our herds* we will go" (ver. 9). He is not inclined to retract now, after two additional plagues, what he had demanded before them. He does not refuse, however, to set forth his reasons. The cattle must go because the feast which they are about to keep requires sacrifices—they must *all* go, because the Israelites do not as yet know what animals, or how many of each, will be required of them. The feast was a new thing, without precedent; its ritual was not yet laid down. No exact directions were to be expected, until the place was reached where God intended that it should be celebrated.

Ver. 27.—**Hardened.**—Again the strong expression, *yekhzak*, is used, as in ver. 20.

Ver. 28.—**And Pharaoh said, etc.** The reply of Pharaoh indicates violent anger. No doubt he thought that now the intention of Moses to deprive him altogether of the services of so many hundred thousand slaves was palpable, and scarcely concealed. Greatly enraged, he gives vent to his rage, with the want of self-control common among Oriental monarchs—rudely bids Moses be gone (*Get thee from me*), threatens him (*take heed to thyself*), and bids him never more seek his presence, under the penalty of instant death, if he makes his appearance. Considering the degree of civilization, refinement, and politeness to which the Egyptians had attained under the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, such an outbreak must be regarded as abnormal, and as implying violent excitement.

Ver. 29.—**And Moses said, etc.** The reply of Moses, so far, is simple and dignified. Thou hast spoken well, he says—"thou hast made a right decision—further interviews between me and thee are useless, can lead to no result, only waste time. This shall be our last interview—I will see thy face no more." It is generally agreed however that Moses did not quit the presence with these words; but continued to address Pharaoh for some little time, making his parting speech in the terms which are recorded in vers. 4—8 of the next chapter. Having announced the Tenth Plague, the coming destruction of the first-born, he turned and "went out from Pharaoh in a great anger" (ch. xi. 8)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 21—23.—*The children of darkness have darkness, and the children of light have light as their portion.* From the beginning of the creation God "divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. i. 4); and ever since the two have been antagonistic the one to the other. Angels as well as men are divided into two classes—bright and glorious spirits, that dwell in the light of God's presence, and are called "angels of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14),

and gloomy spirits of evil, whom God has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for final judgment (Jude 6). So Scripture speaks of man as divided into those who are "of the night and of darkness," and those who are "children of light and of the day" (1 Thess. v. 5).

I. THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS, THOSE WHO LOVE DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, HAVE DARKNESS ASSIGNED TO THEM. 1. *Spiritual darkness.* "Because they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28). Their "foolish heart is darkened" (ib. ver. 21). They grow continually more blind and more ignorant, more incapable of seeing and understanding the things of the Spirit, since these are "spiritually discerned." Their senses not being "exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil," they lose the power of discernment, and "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." "The light that is within them"—i. e., the conscience—having "become darkness, how great is that darkness!" 2. *Mental darkness.* They "grope as the blind in darkness" (Deut. xxviii. 29). They have no clue to the real nature of the universe of which they are a part, or of the world in which they live. They are mentally sightless, unable to perceive the force of arguments and evidences which would convince any one whose mental vision God had not judicially blinded. They sometimes in these days call themselves "Agnostics," implying thereby that they know nothing, see nothing, have no convictions. Not unfrequently they allow themselves to be imposed upon by the most gross illusions, giving that faith to the ravings of Spiritualists which they refuse to the Word of God. Or they accept as certain truth the unverified speculations and hypotheses of so-called scientific men, and consider Revelation to be overruled and set aside by the guesses of a few physiologists. 3. Ultimately, as it would seem, they receive as their portion, *physical darkness.* "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness" (Matt. xxv. 30). "The children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness" (ib. viii. 12). "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain. . . . to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13).

II. THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT, THOSE WHO LOVE LIGHT, HAVE LIGHT FOR THEIR PORTION. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Christ gives his followers, 1. *Spiritual light.* "The commandment is a lamp, the law is light" (Prov. vi. 23). "By doing the will of God, men come to know of the doctrine, whether it is of God" (John vii. 17). Their spiritual discernment is continually increased. Whatever the amount of spiritual darkness around them—in the midst of the clouds of Deism, Pantheism, Agnosticism, scientific materialism, and Atheism, they "have light in their dwellings." There is the true enlightenment. The Lord their God enlightens their darkness (Ps. xviii. 28); opens the eyes of their understanding (Eph. i. 18); fills them with knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. i. 9). 2. *Mental light.* The true Christian "has a right judgment in all things." God gives to those who are his "the spirit of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). Not that Christians are always clever—they may be slow, dull, devoid of all quickness or mental brightness. But they will be soberminded, not easily misled; they will see through sophisms, even if they cannot expose them; they will not be imposed upon by charlatans or *soi-disant* "philosophers." They will "try the spirits" that seek to lead them astray, and not very often be deceived by them. 3. *A final reward of heavenly, ineffable, soul-satisfying light.* After the resurrection of the dead, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" (Dan. xii. 3). They shall dwell where there is light, and "no darkness at all." "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light" of that city which shall have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23, 24). "There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever" (ib. xxii. 5).

Vers. 24—26.—*Compromise the favourite resort of the worldly-minded, the abomination of the spiritually-minded.* Pharaoh had tried compromise more than once and failed (ch. viii. 25—28; x. 8—11); but he must needs try it again. This marks the tenacity with which the worldly-minded cling to what they think the height of policy, but what is, in reality, a weak and unworthy subterfuge. Pharaoh did not wish to grant

any part of the request of Moses; but, if he must yield to some extent, he would save his dignity and his interest, he thought, by yielding less than what was demanded. On four occasions he makes four different offers.

I. **THEY MAY WORSHIP GOD WHEREVER THEY PLEASE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF EGYPT** (ch. viii. 25). A foolish offer, which, if accepted, would certainly have led to a riot and possibly to a civil war (*ib.* 26). But Pharaoh had only thought of his own dignity, not of the consequences. So civil rulers frequently ask the Church of Christ to concede this or that for the honour of the State, when the concession would do the State the greatest possible injury. In their short-sightedness they do not see that in striking at the Church they will wound themselves. In their zeal for their own honour, they do not care how much the Church, or even how much the State suffers.

II. **THEY MAY WORSHIP GOD IN THE WILDERNESS, ONLY THEY MUST NOT GO VERY FAR AWAY** (ch. viii. 28). This offer was an improvement; it did not require a plain violation of the express command of God. But it was insidious. It was made with the view of compelling a return. Pharaoh suspected from the first that the message, "Let my people go," meant "let them go *altogether*." This, until stunned by the dread infliction of the last plague, he was fully resolved not to do. He would let them go as a cat lets a mouse go, so far but not further—not out of his reach. So kings will give their people liberty, or the Church liberty, but only within narrow limits—in seeming rather than in reality—to such an extent as will not interfere with their being the real master, and re-asserting their absolute power at their pleasure. Once more Pharaoh was short-sighted. Had his offer been accepted, and had he then attempted to compel a return, he would only have precipitated some such catastrophe as befel his army at the Red Sea.

III. **THEY MAY GO THE THREE DAYS' JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS, ONLY THEY MUST LEAVE THEIR FAMILIES BEHIND** (ch. x. 8—11). The rejection of his first and second offers left Pharaoh no choice but to allow of the Israelites departing beyond his reach. So he devises a compromise, by which he thinks to lure them back. They shall leave their families behind. But God had said, "Let *my people* go," and children are as essential an element in the composition of a nation as either women or men. This offer was therefore more contrary to the Divine message which he had received than his second one. Worldly-minded men will frequently, while pretending to offer a better compromise, offer a worse; and, both in private and public dealings, it behoves prudent persons to be on their guard, and not imagine that every fresh bid that is made must be an advance. The law of auction does not hold good either in private or in parliamentary bargaining.

IV. **THEY MAY GO THE THREE DAYS' JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND TAKE THEIR FAMILIES, IF THEY WILL ONLY LEAVE THEIR CATTLE BEHIND** (ch. x. 24). This was the most crafty suggestion of all. The cattle had not been mentioned in the Divine message, nor could it be said that they were part of the nation. The king could require the detention of the cattle without infringing the letter of the Divine command. But he secured the return of the nation to Egypt as certainly by this plan as by the retention of the families. A nomadic people could not subsist for many weeks—scarcely for many days, without its flocks and herds. The Israelites would have been starved into surrender. Moses, however, without taking this objection, was able to point out that the terms of the message, rightly weighed with reference to all the circumstances, embraced the cattle, since sacrifice was spoken of, unaccompanied by any limitation. Once more, therefore, he was enabled to decline the compromise suggested as an infraction of the command which he had received, when its terms were rightly understood. Worldly men are continually placing their own construction on the words of God's messages, and saying that this or that should be given up as not plainly contained in them. The example of Moses justifies Christians in scanning narrowly the whole bearing and intention of each message, and insisting on what it implies as much as upon what it expresses. True wisdom will teach them not to be driven to a compromise by worldly men's explanations of the Divine Word. They will study it for themselves, and guide their conduct by their own reading (under God's guidance) of the commands given them. Further, the example of Moses in rejecting all the four offers of Pharaoh, may teach us to suspect, misdoubt, and carefully examine every proposed compromise; the essence of compromise in religion being the surrender of something Divinely ordered

or instituted for the sake of some supposed temporal convenience or advantage. It can really never be right to give up the smallest fragment of revealed truth, or to allow the infraction of the least of God's commandments for even the greatest conceivable amount of temporal benefit either to ourselves or others.

Ver. 25.—*Bad men, when unable to overcome good men's scruples, throw off the mask of friendliness, and show themselves in their true colours.* The circumstances of human life are continually bringing good men and bad men into contact and intercourse. Three results may follow:—1. *The bad may corrupt the good.* This is the result too often. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Few can touch pitch and not be defiled. 2. *The good may convert the bad.* The first Christians converted a world that lay in wickedness. Esther softened the heart of Ahasuerus. St. Ambrose, by long withstanding his will, converted Theodosius. 3. *Neither may make any impression upon the other.* In this case, while the good man merely regrets his inability to turn the bad man to righteousness, the bad man, baffled in his attempts to overcome the scruples of the good man and lead him astray, is apt to be greatly provoked, and to threaten, or even proceed to violence. "Take heed to thyself—in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die." What a spring of bitterness wells up from the evil heart of the sinner who feels himself opposed successfully, thwarted in his schemes, and baffled! While he still hopes to succeed all is smooth speaking. "I have sinned." "Forgive my sin this once only." "Go ye, serve the Lord." When he finds that he cannot prevail, there is a sudden and complete change. Benefits are forgotten; friendliness is a thing of the past; even the prescribed forms of politeness are set aside. The wild beast that lies hid in each unregenerate man shows itself, and the friendly acquaintance of months or years is ready to tear his opposer to pieces.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 21—29.—*The plague of darkness.* This was the third of the great plagues, and it came, as in certain previous instances, unannounced.

I. **THE LAST OF THE ADMONITORY PLAGUES** (vers. 21—24). The plagues, viewed as trials of Pharaoh's character, end with this one. The death of the first-born was a judgment, and gave Pharaoh no further space for repentance. We may view this last of the nine plagues: 1. *As awful in itself.* Whatever its natural basis, the preternatural intensity of the darkness now brought upon the land told plainly enough that it was one of the wonders of Jehovah. For three whole days no one human being in Egypt saw another, even artificial light, it would appear, failing them in their necessity. The fearfulness of the plague was heightened to those stricken by it by the fact that the Israelites "had light in their dwellings"; also by the fact that the sun in his different phases was the chief object of their worship. When one reflects on the terrors which accompany darkness in any case; on the singular effect it has in working on the imagination, and in intensifying its alarms, it will be felt how truly this was a plague laid upon the heart (ch. ix. 14). Darkness suddenly descending on a land invariably awakens superstitious fears, fills multitudes with forebodings of calamity, creates apprehensions of the near approach of the day of judgment; what, then, would be the effect on the Egyptians when they "saw their crystal atmosphere and resplendent heavens suddenly compelled to wear an aspect of indescribable terror and appalling gloom"? We may gather how great was the distress from the fact of the king being compelled, after all that had happened, again to send for Moses (ver. 24). 2. *As symbolic of a spiritual condition.* Egypt was enveloped in the wrath of God. The stroke of that wrath, which might have been averted by timely repentance, was about to descend in the destruction of the first-born. Darkness was in the king's soul. The darkness of doom was weaving itself around his fortunes. Of all this, surely the physical darkness, which, like a dread funeral pall, descended on the land, must be taken as a symbol. When Christ, the sin-bearer, hung on Calvary, a great darkness, in like manner, covered the whole land (Matt. xxvii. 45). The darkness without was but the symbol of a deeper darkness in which Christ's spirit was enveloped. The sinner's condition is one of darkness altogether. He is dark spiritually (2 Cor. iv. 4, 6). He is dark, as under the

wrath of God (Eph. ii. 3). God's people are "children of light," but the transgressor's soul is buried in deadliest gloom (Eph. v. 8). The place of woe is described as "the outer darkness" (Matt. xxv. 30).

II. PHARAOH'S LAST ATTEMPT (vers. 24-27). 1. It was *made under dire compulsion*. The darkness had shaken his heart to its foundations. It is noteworthy that *each* of these three last plagues extorted from him a full or partial consent. The lesser plagues, severe though they were, had not had this effect. He could hold out under two, and in one case under three of them. 2. It was, like the former, *an attempt at compromise*. He would let the "little ones" go, but the flocks and herds were to be left; an absurd prohibition, when the object was to sacrifice. It is made painfully evident that Pharaoh's judgment has left him; that he has become absolutely reckless; that he is no longer his own master; that he is being driven by his passions in opposition to all right reason and prudence; that the end, accordingly, is very near. 3. *It testifies to his increasing hardness*. (1) There is on this occasion no confession of sin. (2) Neither does Pharaoh concede the whole demand. (3) He ends the scene with violence, ordering Moses never to appear again before him, under penalty of death.

III. PHARAOH'S REPROBATION (ver. 29). Moses took Pharaoh at his word. "Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face no more." God's work with this great, bad man was ended, save as the judgment for which he had prepared himself was now to be inflicted upon him. He had not been given up till every conceivable means had been exhausted to bring him to repentance. He had been tried with reason and with threatening; with gentleness and with severity; with mercy and with judgments. He had been reproofed, expostulated with, warned, and frequently chastised. His prayers for respite had in every case been heard. He had been trusted in his promises to let Israel go, and when he had broken them was still forborne with and trusted again. Plagues of every kind had been sent upon him. He had suffered incalculable loss, had endured sore bodily pain, had been shaken in his soul with supernatural terrors. His first plea, of ignorance, and his second, of want of evidence, had been completely shattered. He had been made to confess that he had sinned, and that Jehovah was righteous. Yet under all and through all he had gone on hardening himself, till, finally, even God could wring no confession of sin from him, and his mind had become utterly fatuous, and regardless of consequences. What more was to be done with Pharaoh? Even that which must be done with ourselves under like circumstances—he was rejected, reprobated, given over to destruction. "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7). It was the same fate which overtook Israel when the nation became finally corrupt and hardened.—J. O.

Vers. 20-29.—*The Ninth Plague—the darkness*. I. CONSIDER THE PLAGUE ITSELF. As with the plagues of the gnats and of the boils and blains, so with this plague—there is no record of any formal intimation of its coming. If such an intimation was absent, we feel that there was good reason for the absence. Though Pharaoh had abased himself in great fear and consternation, so that he might get rid of the locusts, yet the moment they were gone all his stubbornness returned in full force. What use was it, then, any longer to hold threatenings over a man of this sort? Indeed, the proper way of considering this ninth plague seems to be to regard it chiefly as a stepping-stone to the last and decisive visitation. An announcement beforehand would not have been wanting, if at all likely to make any serious difference in Pharaoh's conduct. With respect to the plague itself, four points are noticeable—the kind of it, the degree, the duration, and the customary exemption of the Israelites. 1. *The kind of it*. It was a plague of darkness. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is light, and light continually streams forth from him; and without him the minds of men are in dense darkness as to all that is best in knowledge and most substantial in hope for the time to come. When we consider how much is said about spiritual light and spiritual darkness in the Scriptures, it will be seen how appropriate it was that before Jehovah closed his earthly dealings with Pharaoh he should bring his land under this impenetrable cloud. It was a fitting scourge to come upon a king and people whose minds were so darkened to the perception of God. The light and truth which break forth from God vainly struggled to shine through into Pharaoh's heart. This plague was a sort of approach to the primal chaos, a movement towards dissolving the cosmos

into the formless, unilluminated mass from which it sprang. God's first great Word in making order was to say, "Let there be light"; now we almost imagine a corresponding word, "Let there be darkness." The sun, though it may pass over Egypt as usual, no longer rules the day; not a ray penetrates to accommodate and cheer the bewildered land. 2. *The degree of this darkness.* Jehovah tells Moses it will be a darkness which may be felt. Not that it was literally palpable, but rather that the darkness was so dense, so utterly beyond all experience, that it could not possibly be described by language taken from the use of the sense of vision. It was not enough to say, as with respect to the hail and the locusts, that there had been no such experience in Egypt since it became a nation. A new sort of darkness required a new mode of expression to indicate it; and thus by a bold figure the darkness is introduced as affecting not only the usual sense of sight, but the sense of touch as well. The privation of light was in the highest conceivable degree. And here it is surely well to dismiss from our minds all attempts, however well intended, to find a natural basis for this plague. That Jehovah might have made a darkness, and a very terrible one, by increasing and intensifying natural elements and causes is quite true; but somehow, such a view of this plague does not satisfy the demands of the strong terms which are used. Far better is it to suppose that in some mysterious way light lost its radiating power when it came into the Egyptian atmosphere. Doubtless even artificial lights proved useless. If the sun could not pierce into Egypt, little lamps and earth-lights were not likely to succeed. 3. *The duration of it.* It lasted for three days. In this duration lay its peculiar severity. Even a darkness that might be felt would not be much if it was a momentary visitation. But when it extended for three days, disarranging and paralyzing all work, then the magnitude of the visitation would fully appear. It was indeed a plague more terrible in reality than in threatening, and in continuance than in its first embrace. In itself it was not a painful thing; it did not irritate like the frogs, the gnats, and the flies; it did not destroy like the murrain, the hail, and the locusts. It simply settled down on the land, and while it lasted made one of the most informing and gladdening of the senses utterly useless. Even those who loved the darkness because their deeds were evil, would feel, after three days of it, that they were having too much of a good thing. It was just the kind of plague that by the very continuance of it would grow in horror, and at last precipitate a panic. Darkness is the time favourable to all terrifying imaginations. 4. *The exemption of the Israelites.* The district where they dwelt had light in *their dwellings*. Here was, indeed, a more impressive and significant separation than any Jehovah had yet made; and that he should thus separate between Israel and Egypt, as between light and the deepest darkness, was a thing to be expected, considering how soon the Israelites were to go out of the land altogether.

II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENT PROPOSITION BY PHARAOH AND THE RECEPTION OF IT BY MOSES. After three days of the darkness that might be felt, Pharaoh is again brought to his knees, suing for mercy, and, as usual, he offers something which formerly he had refused. Only a little while ago he had set his face against liberating the *little ones* of Israel. Now he has got so far as to say *all the people may depart*—all the human beings—but the flocks and herds must stay behind; and these, of course, were the very substance of Israel's wealth (Gen. xli. 31; xlvii. 6). And not only so, but at present they would look all the more considerable in comparison with the murrain-swept flocks and herds of Egypt. If Pharaoh can only get this request, he thinks he will both serve his dignity and do something to retrieve his fortunes. What a difference between this last interview with Moses and the first! Pharaoh, who began with refusing to yield anything, nay, who by way of answer made the existing bondage even more oppressive, is now, after a course of nine plagues, willing to yield everything—*everything but the property of Israel*. This, indeed, has been a great way to bring him, but it has all been done by a kind of main force. Pharaoh's ignorance of Jehovah's character and demands remains unabated, amid all his experience of Jehovah's power. He cannot yet understand that Jehovah is not to be bargained with. He wants the flocks and herds, as if it were a small matter to keep them back, whereas just one reason why the flocks and herds are so abundant is that there may be enough for sacrifice. Jehovah had a use and place for every Israelite, the oldest and the youngest, and all their belongings. It was an answer of Moses, profoundly suitable to the occasion, when he

said, "We know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither." He had been sent to Pharaoh to demand all, and he could take nothing less. Interesting questions arise here, but there is no information by which we can answer them. Pharaoh called to Moses (ver. 24)—but how came they together in this dense darkness? or was it that Moses waited there in the darkness these three days? Then when Pharaoh spoke, did the darkness at once begin to pass away? We must almost assume that it did, the purpose of its coming having been served the moment Pharaoh is got another step onward in his yielding. But on all these points we have no direct information. Jehovah now hastens the readers of the narrative to the final catastrophe. Where we, in our curiosity, desire particulars, he omits, in order that he may be particular and exact in matters of abiding importance. He is presently to speak of the Pass-over with great minuteness. Details of future and continuous duty are of more moment than mere picturesque embellishments of a passing judgment on Egypt. Thus we are left to infer that the darkness had vanished when for the last time Pharaoh refused to let Israel go. And it must be admitted that there was everything in the inflexible answer of Moses to make Pharaoh, *being such a man as he was*, equally inflexible. "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Israel moves altogether, if it moves at all. This was a very exasperating way for a despot to be spoken to, especially one who felt that he had yielded so much. Indeed, it must have been very astonishing to him to reflect how far he had gone in a path where once it would have seemed ridiculous to suppose that he could take a single step. But now once again he says—in the same reasonless, passionate way that has marked him all along—"Not a step further." After nine plagues he is still the same man at heart. The slightest provocation, and his pride is all aflame, more sensitive than gunpowder to the spark. Nay, most marvellous of all, from the depth of nine successive humiliations he begins to threaten Moses with death. Surely this was the very quintessence of passion and blind rage. The only parallel we can find for it is in the furious, final rush of some great, savage brute, maddened by the shots of the hunter, and making recklessly towards him. What gains he by this advance? He simply comes within easy reach, and another shot from the same weapon, held with perfect coolness and control, lays him dead in the dust. The saddest part of the reflection on Pharaoh's career is, that it gives the essence of so many human lives beside. The hand with which God would clear our corruption away—were we only willing for it to be cleared—stirs it up into a more self-destroying energy and efficacy, if we in our perversity and ignorance determine that the corruption should remain.—Y.

Ver. 21.—A darkness which might be felt suggests the existence of a darkness which is not felt. Consider:—

I. THE UNFELT DARKNESS. [*Illustration.* Stream in summer on sunny day reflects sun, sky, &c. Contrast with condition in winter, hard, dull, icebound; it has *hardened* and no longer *reflects*. If it could be conscious, still flowing on, it might not *feel* much difference, scarcely aware of the strange casing shutting it out from warmth and beauty.] Pharaoh and his people, like the stream, once had light (cf. John i. 9; Rom. i. 19, 20). Then "hardened their hearts." So self-conditioned them that beneath God's influence they could not but harden (x. 1). The hard heart, like the hard ice-coating, shuts out the light and ensures darkness (Rom. i. 21), none the less such darkness not felt (cf. Eph. iv. 17, 18). A terrible judgment, moral darkness, usually resulting from a man's own fault; little by little it grows and deepens until it shuts out not merely light, but even the memory of vanished light (cf. John ix. 39—41). The immediate precursor of ruin, that "quenching of the Spirit," which paves the way for "blasphemy."

II. THE DARKNESS THAT WAS FELT. Pharaoh would not recognise Jehovah. He shut out the light from him and gloried in his moral darkness. Again and again did Jehovah flash home the truth of his existence to hearts which seemed almost judgment proof. Each new judgment was but followed by deeper darkness, the crack through which light seemed to pierce being deliberately blocked up when the fright was over. Self-chosen moral darkness is met by God-sent physical darkness; the darkness of the tempest, the darkness of the locust clouds, lastly, the concentrated darkness of this ninth plague. Through all, the object is to pierce and, if it may be, dispel the moral

darkness; a kind of homœopathic treatment, which, if it do not cure, *may* kill [*Illustration.* The frozen stream. Light fire upon the surface. Clouds and flame shut out the sunlight more than ever, yet heat *may* melt the ice covering, and, if so, then light can enter. If not, when fire is extinguished, the ash-strewn surface more impervious to light than ever.] Pharaoh at first seemed to be thawing (x. 24), but he only felt the *heat*, he did not recognise the *light*. When the heat passed, darker than ever (27—29). The last chance gone, what left? (Jude 13). God still meets this self-chosen moral darkness by similar methods. Judgments which may be felt flash momentary light upon the self-inflicted darkness which is not felt. He *will* that all men should come to repentance; if we shut our hearts to the inner voice, he summons us by outer voices, which cannot but attract attention. They *may*, however, be disregarded; the power of man's self-will in this world seems strong enough to resist anything.

III. LIGHT IN THE DWELLINGS. 1. *Physical.* Egyptians nad made a difference between themselves and Israel, a difference which had driven Israel to seek help from God. Now God confirms that difference. The light, perhaps, not perfect. [If darkness caused by sand-storm from S.W. may have been such light as was obtainable at the fringe of the storm cloud.] Still it was sufficient, a sign of God's care and watchfulness for those who were prepared to receive and recognise it. And this the Israelites were prepared to do, for the light in the dwelling was the type of light in the heart. 2. *Moral.* They had been "in darkness," the darkness of slavery and idolatry (cf. Josh. xxiv. 14); but the light had dawned upon them, and, however imperfectly, they had recognised and welcomed it. The cry in the darkness (Ps. cxxx. 6) had been heard and answered. By God's help the inner light had been quickened and fostered; and to those who have the inner light, however feeble, he gives help that it may grow brighter. He will not quench the smoking flax, but fan it to a flame (cf. Ps. xviii. 27—28).

Application. There is one who is the Light of the World. The great thing for us is to walk in the light (1 John i. 5—7). If we do not, darkness can but deepen till the night come (John ix. 4; cf. Job xviii. 18). Yet even those in darkness of their own making, God, in his love, still tries to lighten (cf. his dealings with the Egyptians; also our Lord's with the Jews, John ix. 39). If the light is still resisted, then cf. Matt. xxv. 30. If we do walk in the light so far as we know it, then cf. Prov. iv. 18. Even when dark for others, still light for us, Is. lx. 1, 2; and if the darkness does, as it sometimes will, overshadow us even so Ps. cxlii. 4; Is. l. 10.—G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI

Vers. 1—3.—We have here a parenthetical statement of something that had previously happened. Before Moses was summoned to appear in the presence of Pharaoh as related in ch. x. 24, it had been expressly revealed to him by God, 1. That one more plague, and one only, was impending; 2. That this infliction would be effectual, and be followed by the departure of the Israelites; and, 3. That instead of reluctantly allowing them to withdraw from his kingdom, the monarch would be eager for their departure and would actually hasten it. He had also been told that the time was now come when the promise made to him in Mount Horeb, that his people should "spoil the Egyptians" (ch. iii. 22), would receive its accomplishment. The Israelites, before departing, were to ask their Egyptian

neighbours for any articles of gold and silver that they possessed, and would receive them (ver. 2). The reasons for this extraordinary generosity on the part of the Egyptians are then mentioned, in prolongation of the parenthesis. 1. God "gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians"; and 2. The circumstances of the time had exalted Moses, and made him be looked upon as "very great" (ver. 3), so that there was a general inclination to carry out his wishes.

Ver. 1.—And the Lord spake unto Moses. Rather, "Now the Lord had said unto Moses." The Hebrew has no form for the pluperfect tense, and is consequently obliged to make up for the grammatical deficiency by using the simple preterite in a pluperfect sense. We cannot definitely fix the time when Moses had received this revelation; but the expression, one plague more, shows that it was after the commencement of the "plague of darkness."

When he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out altogether. The Hebrew will not bear this rendering. It runs distinctly thus—"When he shall let you go altogether, he will assuredly thrust you out hence." As Canon Cook notes, "the meaning is—when at last he lets you depart, with children, flocks, herds, and all your possessions, he will compel you to depart in haste" (*Speaker's Commentary*, vol. i. p. 290). It has been well noticed by the same writer that both this announcement, and the previous relentings of Pharaoh, would have caused Moses to have preparations made, and to hold the Israelites in readiness for a start upon their journey almost at any moment. No doubt a most careful and elaborate organization of the people must have been necessary; but there had been abundant time for such arrangements during the twelvemonth that had elapsed since the return of Moses from Midian.

Ver. 2.—Every man . . . every woman. In ch. iii. 22 only women had been mentioned. Now the terms of the direction were enlarged. It is worthy of notice that gold and silver ornaments—ear-rings, collars, armlets, bracelets, and anklets, were worn almost as much by the Egyptian men of the Rameside period as by the women. Borrow. On this faulty translation, see the comment on ch. iii. 22. Jewels. Literally, "articles." The word is one of a very wide meaning, and might include drinking-cups and other vessels; but from the statement in ch. iii. 22, that they

were to "put them on their sons and on their daughters," it is clear that personal ornaments are especially meant.

Ver. 3.—And the Lord gave the people favour—i.e. When the time came. See below, ch. xii. 36. Moreover the man Moses, etc. It has been supposed that this is an interpolation, and argued that Moses, being so "meek" as he was (Num. xii. 3), would not have spoken of himself in the terms here used. But very great here only means "very influential;" and the fact is stated, not to glorify Moses, but to account for the ornaments being so generally given. Moreover, it is highly improbable that any other writer than himself would have so baldly and bluntly designated Moses as the man Moses. (Compare Deut. xxxiii. 1; xxxiv. 5; Josh. i. 1, 13, 15; xiv. 6, 7; xxii. 2, 4; etc.) The "greatness" which Moses had now attained was due to the powers which he had shown. First of all, he had confounded the magicians (ch. viii. 18, 19); then he had so far impressed the courtiers that a number of them took advantage of one of his warnings and thereby saved their cattle and slaves (ch. ix. 20). Finally, he had forced the entire Court to acknowledge that it lay in his power to destroy or save Egypt (ch. x. 7). He had after that parleyed with the king very much as an equal (*ib.* 8-11; 16-18). It is no wonder that the Egyptians, who regarded their king as a "great god," were deeply impressed.

HOMILETICS

Vers. 1-3.—*Crises bring out men's characters, and cause them to be properly appreciated.* It is evident that, as the crisis approached, Pharaoh sank in the estimation of his subjects, while Moses rose. Pharaoh showed himself changeable, faithless, careless of his subjects' good, rude, violent. He was about to show himself ready to rush from one extreme into the other (ver. 1), and to "thrust out" the people whom he had so long detained. The conduct of Moses had been consistent, dignified, patriotic, bold, and courageous. He had come to be regarded by the Egyptians as "very great," and the conduct of the Israelite people had also obtained approval. Their patience, fortitude, submission to their leaders, and quiet endurance of suffering, had won upon the Egyptians, and caused them to be regarded with favour. So it is generally in crises.

I. *CRISES BRING OUT THE CHARACTERS OF THE BAD, INTENSIFYING THEIR DEFECTS.* Under the pressure of circumstances obstinacy becomes infatuation, indifference to human suffering develops into active cruelty, self-conceit into overbearing presumption, ill-temper into violence. At the near approach of danger the rash grow reckless, the timid cowardly, the hesitating wholly unstable, the selfish utterly egoist. In quiet times defects escape notice, which become palpable when a man is in difficulties. Many a king has reigned with credit till a crisis came, and then lost all his reputation, because his character could not bear the strain put upon it. Such times are like bursts of hot weather, under which "ill weeds grow apace."

II. *THE CHARACTERS OF THE BETTER SORT OF MEN ARE ELEVATED AND IMPROVED UNDER CRISES.* All the higher powers of the mind, all the nobler elements of the moral character, are brought into play by crises, and through their exercise strengthened and developed. Promptitude, resolution, boldness, trust in God, come with the call for them; and the discipline of a year under such circumstances does the work of twenty.

The Moses of chs. x. xi. is a very different man from the Moses of ch. iii. He is firm, resolute, self-reliant, may we not add, eloquent? No wonder that he was "very great" in the eyes both of the great officers of Pharaoh's court and of the people. He had withstood and baffled the magicians; he had withstood Pharaoh; he had never blenched nor wavered; he had never lost his temper. With a calm, equable, unfailing persistence, he had gone on preferring the same demand, threatening punishments if it were not granted, inflicting them, removing them on the slightest show of repentance and relenting. He had thus won the respect both of the Court and of the common people, as much as Pharaoh had lost it, and was now generally looked up to and regarded with feelings of admiration and approval. So the true character of the Christian minister is often brought out, tested, and recognised in times of severe trial and calamity, in a siege, a famine, a pestilence, a strike; and a respect is won, which twenty years of ordinary quiet work would not have elicited. Let ministers see to it, that they make the most of such occasions, not for their own honour, but for God's.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-4.—The beginning of the end. I. THE STROKE STILL IN RESERVE (ver. 1). God would bring on Pharaoh "one plague more." This would be effectual. It would lead him to let the people go from Egypt. So eager would he be for their departure, that he would even *thrust* them out in haste. The nature of this final stroke is described in vers. 4-7. It would be the death in one night of the first-born of man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt. This stroke might have been delivered earlier, but, 1. It might not at an earlier stage have had the same effect. 2. There was mercy to Pharaoh in giving him the *opportunity* of yielding under less severe inflictions before visiting him with this last and decisive one. 3. The previous plagues gave Pharaoh, moreover, an opportunity of doing *freely* what he now was driven to do under irresistible *compulsion*. 4. The final stroke was delayed that by the succession of plagues which were brought on Egypt, the deliverance might be rendered more imposing, and made more memorable. The object was not simply to get Israel out of Egypt in the easiest way possible, but to bring them forth in the way most glorifying to God's justice, holiness, and power. This has been already shown (ch. vi.; vii. 3, 5; ix. 15, 16; x. 1, 2).

II. THE COMMAND TO ASK FROM THE EGYPTIANS (vers. 2, 3). 1. *The request.* The Israelites were to borrow, or ask, from the Egyptians "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold;" "raiment" also, and whatever else they required (ch. iii. 22; xii. 35, 36). (1) The people were *entitled* to these gifts in repayment for past unrequited services; as compensation for losses and sufferings during the century of slavery. The principle of "compensation" is a prominent one in modern legislation. Governments have been mindful, in decreeing slave-emancipation, of compensation to the *owners*; God bethought himself of compensation to the *slaves*. Which is the more reasonable? (2) God *authorised* the people to *demand* these gifts. A demand, coming under the circumstances from Jehovah, was equivalent to a command. And after what had happened, it was impossible for any reasonable mind to doubt that the demand *had* come from God. This was sanction sufficient. The Lord gives, and the Lord is entitled to take away (Job i. 21). "The Lord hath need of it" is sufficient reason for giving up *anything* (Luke xix. 34). 2. *The response.* The plague would be influential in leading the Egyptians to give of their wealth to the Israelites (cf. ch. xii. 36). God would so incline their hearts. This willingness to part with their valuables arose not so much (1) From gratitude for past benefits, as (2) From a desire to stand well with a people who were so eminently favoured of God, and (3) From *fear* of God, and a desire to get rid of this people, who had proved so terrible a snare to them, as quickly and as peaceably as possible. Suggestions of the passage: (1) The hearts of men are in God's hands (Prov. xxi. 1). He rules in hearts as well as in the midst of worlds. Without interfering with freedom, or employing other than *natural* motives, he can secretly incline the heart in the direction he desires. (2) The time will come when the world will be glad to stand well with the Church. (3.) There is much in the world that the Church may legitimately covet to possess. The "world" is a much abused term. "As

the Church in its collective capacity is the region of holiness, so the world is that of sin. But it must be carefully observed, that the view is taken of it in its totality, not of each of the parts. As a whole, moral corruption was (in New Testament times) so interwoven with its entire civilisation that it imparted to it the general aspect of evil. As the teaching of the New Testament by no means asserts that all the various elements which meet in the kingdom of God are good, so it is equally far from intending to affirm that every portion of human civilisation, as it then existed, was the contrary. Many things were only rendered evil by their connection with the prevailing moral corruption." (Rev. C. A. Row.) 4. The Church will ultimately be enriched with the spoils of the world (Rev. xxi. 24-26). 5. Whatever service God requires of his people, he will see that they are suitably equipped for it, and that their needs are, in his providence, abundantly supplied (Phil. iv. 18). 6. The people of God will not ultimately suffer loss from adherence to him. 7. God can make even the enemy a means of benefit to his cause.

III. THE GREATNESS OF MOSES. "Moreover, the man Moses was very great," &c. (ver. 3). The promise was thus fulfilled. "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" (ch. vii. 1). This greatness of Moses was, 1. Got without his seeking for it. Like Jesus, he came not doing his own will, but the will of him that sent him (John v. 38). 2. Got without his expecting it. Moses looked for anything but honour in the service to which he had been called. Remember his deep despondency at the entrance on his task, and for long after (ch. iii. 11; iv. 10-13; v. 22, 23; vi. 12, 30). 3. Got in doing God's work. 4. Got by God's power resting on him (cf. Deut. xxxiv. 10-12). The service of God is the path of true greatness, and leads to undying honour (Rom. ii. 7, 10).—J. O.

How God justifies the trust of all who hope in his mercy. I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. The preceding plagues had terrified for a moment; this will crush resistance. The stroke long delayed was now at length to fall. The last awful pause had come, during which Egypt waited in dread, and Israel in hope mingled with awe. 2. The like moment will come in God's contest with sin. There will be a last awful pause, and then the trump of God shall sound. 3. The last hour of this earthly life of ours will also come, and the soul be freed from the grasp of sorrow, and pass up through the pearly gates into the father's home.

II. ITS COMPLETENESS. "He shall surely thrust you out hence altogether." Every bond will be broken. 1. The churches of God shall no more feel the world's afflicting hand. 2. Sin shall have no more dominion over God's redeemed. God's deliverance comes slowly, but when it does come it is full and lasting.

III. IT WILL BE ATTENDED WITH GREAT ENRICHMENT. It will not be an escape with mere life. To their own shall be added the wealth of their foes. 1. The riches of the nations will yet be the possession of the people of God. 2. This will be only the type of the true riches with which the redeemed shall be endowed.

IV. AND WITH GREAT HONOUR. The despised bondsmen were girt with reverence and awe, such as had never encircled the throne of the Pharaohs. The true kings of the earth for whose manifestation the world waits are the sons of God. They will be, too, the princes of heaven, co-heirs with Christ, sharers of the throne of the Son of God.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 4-8.—The writer returns here to his account of the last interview between Moses and Pharaoh, repeating the introductory words of ch. x. 23—"and Moses said." Having accepted his dismissal, and declared that he would not see the face of Pharaoh any more (*ibid.*), Moses, before quitting the presence, proceeded to announce the last plague, pre-facing the announcement, as usual (ch. vii. 17; viii. 2; ix. 1, 13; x. 3), with the solemn

declaration, which showed that he acted in the matter merely as God's instrument—"Thus saith Jehovah." He makes the announcement with the utmost plainness, noting the exact time of the visitation (ver. 4)—its extent (ver. 5)—the terrible "cry" that would follow (ver. 6)—the complete exemption of the Israelites (ver. 7)—the message which Pharaoh would send him by his servants, to depart at once—and his own intention of acting on it

(ver. 8). Then, without waiting for a reply, in hot anger at the prolonged obstinacy of the monarch, he went out

Ver. 4.—About midnight.—Compare ch. xii. 29. It would add to the horror of the infliction that it should come in the depth of the night. Probably the night intended was not the next night, but one left purposely indefinite, that terror and suspense might work upon the mind of Pharaoh. Shall I go out. The word "I" is repressed in the original, and is emphatic. This crowning plague Jehovah inflicts by no instrumentality, but takes wholly upon himself. (See ch. xii. 12, 13, 23, 27, 29.)

Ver. 5.—All the first-born. The law of primogeniture prevailed in Egypt, as among most of the nations of antiquity. The monarchy (under the New Empire, at any rate) was hereditary, and the eldest son was known as *erpa suten sa*, or "hereditary Crown Prince." Estates descended to the eldest son, and in many cases high dignities also. No severer blow could have been sent on the nation, if it were not to be annihilated, than the loss in each house of the hope of the family—the parents' stay, the other children's guardian and protector. Who sitteth. "Sitteth" refers to "Pharaoh," not to "first-born." The meaning is, "from the first-born of the king who occupies the throne to the first-born of the humblest slave or servant." This last is represented by the handmaid who is behind the mill, since grinding at a mill was regarded as one of the severest and most irksome forms of labour. The work was commonly assigned to captives (Is. xlvii. 1, 2; Judg. xvi. 21). It was done by either one or two persons sitting, and consisted in rotating rapidly the upper millstone upon the lower by means of a handle. All the first-born of beasts. Not the first-born of cattle only, but of all *beasts*. The Egyptians had pet animals in most houses, dogs, apes, monkeys, perhaps cats and ichneumons. Most temples had sacred animals, and in most districts of Egypt, some beasts were regarded as sacred, and might not be killed, their death being viewed as a calamity. The loss of so many animals would consequently be felt by

the Egyptians as a sensible aggravation of the infliction. It would wound them both in their domestic and in their religious sensibilities.

Ver. 6.—There shall be a great cry. The violence of Oriental emotions, and the freedom with which they are vented are well known. Herodotus relates that the Egyptians strip themselves and beat their breasts at funerals (ii. 85). No doubt they also uttered shrill lamentations, as did the Greeks (Lucian, *De Luctu*, § 12) and the Persians (Herod. ix. 24). With bitter mourning in every house, the "cry" might well be one, such as there had been none like before, neither would there be any like again.

Ver. 7.—Shall not a dog move his tongue. So far from a sudden destruction coming upon them, there shall not so much as a dog bark at them. They shall incur no hurt—no danger. (Compare Josh. x. 21.) That ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference—i.e., "that both ye courtiers and all Egypt may know how great a difference God puts between us—his peculiar people—and you wretched idolaters."

Ver. 8.—All these thy servants—i.e., all these courtiers here present. Shall come. Literally, "shall descend." Kalisch observes that by the Hebrew idiom "going from a nobler place to one of less distinction is called descending" (*Comment.* p. 133). And bow down. Make obeisance to me, as if I were a king. The last of the plagues would cause the courtiers to look on Moses as the real king of the land, and pay him royal honours. All the people that follow thee. Literally, as in the margin, "that is at thy feet;" i.e., that follows and obeys thee." The Egyptians looked on Moses as king, or at any rate prince of his nation. In a great anger. Literally, "in heat of anger." The abrupt dismissal (ch. x. 28), the threat against his life (*ibid.*) and the announcement that no more interviews would be granted him moved the indignation of Moses, who was not conscious to himself of having done anything to deserve such treatment. He had answered the king calmly and temperately (ch. x. 29; xi. 4-8); but knew what his feelings had been, and here records them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6-7.—*The issues of life and death are in the hand of God.* For the most part there is, or there seems to be, one event to the righteous and to the wicked (Eccles. ix. 2). Death happens alike to all, and does not appear to choose his victims on any principle of sparing good and punishing ill desert. War, famine, pestilence, sweep away equally the good and the bad. This is the general law of God's providence; but he makes occasional exceptions. The issues of life and death are really his. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. If he see fit, he can "put a difference" between his own people and others. He can strike with death whomsoever he pleases; he can spare those whom he chooses to spare. We see him here:—

I. MAKING DEATH AN INSTRUMENT OF VENGEANCE, NOT ON THOSE WHO DIE, BUT ON THOSE WHO SURVIVE. Pharaoh is punished, and the Egyptians generally are punished, by the sudden death of the first-born. They had deserved this retribution by their cruelty to the Hebrews, and especially by the drowning of the Hebrew male children (ch. i. 22). It afflicted all, however, alike, whether they had taken part in the above-mentioned cruelties or not. This was because it was a *national* chastisement; and the case had been the same with almost all the other plagues.

II. STRIKING TERROR INTO A WHOLE COMMUNITY BY VISITING WITH DEATH A CERTAIN NUMBER. Death is the main fear of worldly men. Anything else may be endured, made up for, made the best of. But for death there is no help, no remedy. The awful phantom is, as far as possible, kept out of sight, unthought of, unprepared for, thrust into the background. Men live as if they had a freehold of life, not a leasehold. When the gaunt spectre draws near; when, in the shape of cholera or fever, he makes his entrance upon the scene and challenges attention, the result is, for the most part, a panic. So it was in Egypt. The Egyptians wrote much of death, reminded each other of death (Herod. ii. 78), prepared tombs for themselves with great care speculated largely upon the condition of souls in another world; but it would seem that they shrank, as much as ordinary men, from near contact with the grisly phantom. It was now about to be suddenly brought home to them how thin a barrier separates between the two worlds. In the presence of death they would wake up to the realities of life. They would be conquered, submissive, ready to do whatever was God's will. Some such results are traceable whenever and wherever imminent death threatens a large number, and are to be watched for by the minister, who will find his opportunity at such seasons, and should take advantage of it.

III. SHOWING HIS FAVOUR TO HIS OWN PEOPLE BY EXEMPTING THEM WHOLLY FROM THE VISITATION. Against the Israelites not even a dog would move his tongue (ver. 7). With mortality all around them, with a corpse in each Egyptian house, with animals lying dead on all sides, in the open country as well as in the towns and houses, they would be completely free from the visitation; a special providence would save and protect them. Such an exemption was, of course, miraculous, and is well nigh unparalleled. But still there have been cases where God's people have suffered marvellously little in a time of pestilence, when it has seemed to strike almost none but reckless and vicious lives, when an arm has appeared to be extended over the righteous. At such times what praise and gratitude are not due to God for "putting a difference between the Egyptians and Israel!" He spares when we deserve punishment, and in his wrath thinks upon mercy. He gives a token of his approval to men of regular lives and temperate habits, by "passing them over" when he walks through the land dealing out destruction.

Ver. 8.—Righteous anger. It seems to be supposed by some that the true Christian ought never to be angry. St. Paul certainly says in one place, "Let *all* bitterness, and wrath, and *anger*, and clamour be put away from you" (Eph. iv. 31); and in another, "Put ye off all these, *anger*, wrath, malice" (Col. iii. 8). But he guards himself from being misunderstood by giving a command in one of these very chapters (Eph. iv. 26), "Be ye angry, and sin not." He was himself angry when he said to the High Priest, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall" (Acts xxiii. 3), and to the jailer at Philippi, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily: but let them come themselves and fetch us out" (ib. xvi. 37). There is such a thing as "righteous anger;" and it was righteous anger which Moses felt at this time. He was indignant—

I. BECAUSE GOD WAS SPURNED AND HIS COMMANDMENTS MADE OF NO ACCOUNT. Pharaoh, after temporising, and professing contrition, and suggesting a variety of compromises, had declared himself finally against God—cast his words behind his back—and resolved on following out his own will, and defying the Almighty. Bold, unblushing wickedness may well make the minister of God angry. It is an insult to God's majesty. It is a contradiction of man's moral nature. It is an open enlisting in the service of Satan.

II. BECAUSE HIS COUNTRYMEN WERE WRONGED, BY BEING DISAPPOINTED OF THEM

JUST HOPES. Pharaoh's professions, his promises, his attempts at compromise had given the Israelites a right to expect that he would yield in the end. His sudden stiffness was an injury to them, with which Moses did well to sympathise. How should he not be indignant, when the just rights of his nation were wholly ignored, their patience despised, and their legitimate expectations balked? His anger, so far as it arose out of sympathy for them, was justified—(a) by the bitterness of their feelings; (b) by the heartiness in which he had thrown himself into their cause; (c) by the apparent hopelessness of their case, if the king now drew back.

III. BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN HIMSELF INSULTED AND ILL-USED. The anger which springs from a sense of wrong done to oneself is less noble than that which arises from a sense of wrong done to our fellows, and still less noble than that which has its origin in zeal for the honour of God; but still it is not illegitimate. Wrong done to oneself is nevertheless wrong, and, as wrong, properly stirs up anger within us. Moses had been ill-used by Pharaoh from first to last, derided (ch. v. 4), trifled with (ch. viii. 26-32; x. 16-20), driven from his presence (ch. x. 11); and now at last had been deprived of his right to make personal representations to the monarch, and even threatened with death (*ib. ver. 28*). And why? What evil had he done? He had simply delivered God's messages to Pharaoh, and inflicted the plagues at God's command. Of his own mere notion he had done nothing but shorten the duration of the plagues by entreating God from time to time at Pharaoh's request. Even, therefore, if his "heat of anger" had been caused solely by the wrong done to himself, it would have been justified.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4-10.—A finale. These verses end the story of how God wrought with Pharaoh to subdue him to his will. They prepare us for the catastrophe which brought the long conflict to a termination, and forced a way of egress for two millions of Hebrews through the barred gates of Egypt.

I. LAST WORDS TO PHARAOH (VERS. 4-9). Vers. 1-3 of this chapter are obviously parenthetical. They relate to a communication made to Moses prior to the visit to Pharaoh recorded in ch. x. 24-29, and in anticipation of it. The substance of that communication is now conveyed to the king. Having delivered his message as God had directed, Moses finally leaves the royal presence (ver. 9). The present passage is therefore to be read in immediate connection with ch. x. 29. Pharaoh would see the face of Moses no more—*i.e.*, as a commissioner from Jehovah—but before leaving, Moses has words to speak which are to Pharaoh the knell of doom. The judgment he announces is the death of the first-born. On this observe—1. *It was a judgment-stroke more terrible than any which had preceded.* This is plain from the nature of it. What, put one with the other in the balance, was the discomfort, pain, loss, terror, devastation of crops, and darkening of the earth, caused by the previous plagues, to this tremendous horror of finding in one night, in each home throughout the land, a dead first-born? The wound here was truly mortal. The first-born is the special joy of parents. He is loved, fondled, tended, admired, as few of the children are which come after him. The pride of the parents centres in him. Their hopes are largely built up on what he may become. He has drawn to himself, and embodies, a larger share of their thought, interest, sympathy, and affection than perhaps they are well aware of. He is the pillar of their household. They look to him to bear up its honour when their own heads are laid in the dust. To touch him is to touch the apple of their eye, to quench the central illumination of their home. They are proud of him as a babe, the first occupant of the cradle; they are proud of him as a boy, unfolding his mental and physical powers in rivalry with his youthful peers; they are proud of him as a young man, when thought and decision begin to stamp their lines upon his brow, and manly dignity gives a new grace to his deportment. With the help of such considerations, try to estimate the wrench to the heart's tenderest affections, in the million homes of Egypt, by the simultaneous discovery that in each there is a ghastly corpse, and *that* the corpse of the first-born. No wonder there was "a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more" (ver. 6). Natural affection retains a mighty hold of natures often otherwise very depraved. And there is

no reason to suppose that, taken in the mass, the people of Egypt were characterised by a greater want of it than others. Even the tiger has a tigerish love of his cubs, and, wicked man though he was, the pride of Pharaoh in his first-born may have been of no ordinary intensity. Note then the following circumstances as indicative of the especial horror of this judgment. (1) It would be *supernatural*. Natural causes were more or less involved in the other plagues, but this judgment was to be inflicted by the direct stroke of the Almighty. (2) It would be *subtle*. There would be no preliminary symptoms, no warning of approaching death. (3) It would be *at midnight*. The darkest and "eerie" hour of the whole twenty-four, the hour specially associated with the gasping out of the spirit in death. (4) It would be *universal*. There would not be a house in which there was not one dead (ch. xii. 30). Not one left to comfort another. All alike swallowed up in indescribable sorrow, in blackest grief and bitterest lamentation—the woe of each intensifying the woe of all the rest. What a horror was this! Death in a house is always oppressive to the spirit. The muffled steps and woe-disfigured faces tell the melancholy tale to every visitor. When the death is of one high in rank, the mourning is proportionately deep and widely spread. But death in every city, in every street, in every house, among high and low alike, who will unfold the misery which this implied, or do justice to the ghastly sense of mortality with which it would fill the breasts of the survivors! The nearest image we can form of it is the state of a town or district where a pestilence is raging, and corpses are being hurried to the dead-house in hundreds. And even this falls immeasurably short of the reality. (5) It would *embrace all ranks and ages*. Palace and hovel would have its dead son. The first-born of beasts would be added to the slain. But in the general mourning over dead *men* this would be but little regarded.

2. *It was a judgment-stroke bearing reference to God's relation to Israel.* The key to the form which it assumed is furnished in ch. iv. 22, 23. "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born; and I say unto thee, Let my son go that he may serve me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." See Homily on ch. xii. 29—31. Israel was God's first-born in relation to the "many nations" of the redeemed world, which in its fulness was to embrace "all kindreds, peoples, and tongues" (Gen. xvii. 5; Rom. iv. 16—19; Rev. vii. 9). "As the first-born in God's elect is to be spared and rescued, so the first-born in the house of the enemy, the beginning of his increase and the heir of his substance, must be destroyed—the one a proof that the whole family were appointed to life and blessing, the other, in like manner, a proof that all who were aliens from God's covenant of grace equally deserved, and should certainly in due time inherit, the evils of perdition" (Fairbairn). We may connect the judgment more simply with that law of symmetry which appears in so many of God's judgments, the retribution being modelled after the pattern of the crime to which it is related. Examples: Haman hanged on his own gallows (Esther v. 14); Adoni-bezek mutilated in his thumbs and great toes (Jud. i. 6, 7); David punished for adultery by dishonour done to his own concubines (2 Sam. xvi. 20—23), &c. So Pharaoh, the would-be destroyer of God's first-born, is punished in the destruction of his own first-born. The *ius talionis* has a startling field of operations in the Divine judgments.

3. *It was a judgment involving the whole of Egypt in suffering for the sin of the ruler.* This was the case in all the plagues; but it is specially noticeable in this, where the judgment strikes a direct blow at every hearth. It may be said, doubtless with truth, that Egypt, in this severe judgment, was punished also for its *own* wickedness, the people, in the matter of the oppression of the Israelites, having been active partners in the guilt of the monarch. It is obvious, however, that the immediate occasion of this terrible blow falling on the land was the continued hardness of heart of Pharaoh. Had he relented, the judgment would not have fallen; it was because he did not relent that it actually fell. We come back here to that principle of solidarity which rules so widely in God's moral administration. The many rise or fall with the one; the rewards of righteousness and the penalties of transgression alike overflow upon those related to the immediate agent. The widest applications of this principle are those stated in Rom. v. 12—21—the ruin of the race in Adam; the redemption of the race in Christ.

4. *It was a judgment in which a marked distinction was to be put between the Egyptians and the Hebrews* (ver. 7). Israel, however, was only exempted from like doom by resort to the blood of atonement—a lesson as to their natural state

of condemnation, and as to the channel through which alone redeeming grace could flow to them.

II. THE WITHDRAWAL OF MOSES. "Moses went out from Pharaoh in a great anger" (ver. 8). 1. *There are occasions on which it is lawful to be angry.* This was one of them. He would have been a man utterly without soul who would not have been roused to indignation by the towering pride and extraordinary ingratitude and faithlessness of Pharaoh, not to speak of the insults he was heaping on Jehovah, and the violence threatened against Moses himself. 2. *The meekest nature is that which, on proper occasions, is capable of the most burning and vehement anger.* On the relation of the anger of Moses to his meekness, see Homily on ch. ii. 12. Another example is found in the apostle John—the apostle of love. The highest example of all is the Son of Man, "meek and lowly in heart," yet capable of terrible and scathing wrath—"the wrath of the Lamb" (Matt. xi. 29; Mark iii. 5; Rev. vi. 16, 17).

III. A SUMMING UP (vers. 9, 10). The conclusion of the series of plagues having been reached, and negotiations with Pharaoh having been finally broken off, Moses sums up the results. The notable point is, that it was all as the Lord had said. It had been foretold that Pharaoh would not hearken, and neither had he hearkened; but his hardening had been the occasion of God's multiplying his wonders in the land of Egypt. The climax of the hardening was reached under this last warning. Infuriated by his passion, Pharaoh appears to have paid no heed to it. Yet the fact that he did not, illustrates a point already dwelt upon—the tendency of hardening against God to involve the whole moral nature, extending at last to the destruction even of the natural affections. We have seen how reckless Pharaoh had become of the well-being of his subjects (ch. x. 7). See him now perilling the life of his own son, not to speak of the lives of the first-born throughout the whole land, that he may be spared the humiliation of submitting to Jehovah! Perilling, even, is too weak a word, for experience had taught him that God's threatenings in no case went unfulfilled. "Sacrificing" would be the more proper term. Even to this length was Pharaoh ultimately driven by his enmity against God, and his example remains as a melancholy warning to ourselves.—J. O.

Chap. xi. vers. 4-10; chap. xii. vers. 29-36.—*The tenth plague and its decisive result—the destruction of the first-born.* In ch. x. 29, Moses says to Pharaoh, "I will see thy face again no more," while in ch. xi. 4-8, he is represented as making to Pharaoh an announcement of the last plague. Perhaps the best way of clearing this apparent contradiction is to suppose that in the narrative as it originally stood there was really no break between ch. x. 29 and ch. xi. 4, and that the three intervening verses were afterwards introduced in some way which we cannot now explain. So taking the narrative, all is made straightforward and additionally impressive. Moses followed up his intimation that Pharaoh should see his face no more, with a statement which plainly showed the reason why. No more would he come into Pharaoh's presence *uninvited by Pharaoh*, simply because there would no more be need to do so. Jehovah was about to deal the last blow without any human instrumentality whatever.

I. TRY TO ESTIMATE SOMEWHAT OF THE COMBINATION OF FORCES IN THIS LAST PLAGUE, WHICH MADE IT SO EFFECTIVE FOR ITS PURPOSE. 1. *There was the hour chosen—midnight.* It was not like the rest of the plagues, which extended over a more or less period of time; but, *being a momentary blow*, the most impressive moment could be chosen for striking it. This was midnight, the time of security, repose, and deep silence. Each family was gathered together under its own roof; not separated, as might have been the case during the day, each one at his appointed work. There was no bustle of business, as there might have been at noon, to help in drowning and qualifying the horror of the transaction. 2. *There was an element of peculiar force in the very class of persons who were smitten.* Not only had Jehovah advanced to take away the lives of human beings, but he had directed his destructions, with evident and unerring purpose, upon one particular class. The destruction was not as a mere decimation, the taking of one out of so many, it mattered not who, so long as one was taken. In every household it was the first-born who lay dead. No regard was shown to personal character or special circumstances. All the first-born were stricken, the virtuous as well as the vicious; the amiable, promising youth from whom much was

expected, and the scapegrace who was bringing a father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; the young man who might be the only son of his mother and she a widow, alike with him who was the first-born among many brethren. The first-born is the centre of so many hopes and calculations, that when he is stricken there may be the instantaneous reaction of an irretrievable despair. Zechariah speaks very emphatically of those who are in bitterness for their first-born (ch. xii. 10). In many cases the first-born would also be the just-born. 3. *There was an element that helped to bring decision in the very greatness of the cry that was elicited.* How far the announcement made to Pharaoh had travelled we know not; but it must have gone far enough to produce a consentaneous cry of recognition when the blow was struck. Pharaoh would know, and also his courtiers, and many at different points through the city, even before they came out of their houses, that it was by no ordinary death the first-born had died. Each one, thus already informed, would suspect the whole terrible truth with respect to all the first-born of the land. In this way certainty would come that the prediction was fulfilled, even before information on the point was actually obtained. Bad news travels quickly, and all the quicker when special facilities have been prepared by Jehovah himself, as they evidently were in this instance. Remember, also, the demonstrative, vociferous mode of expressing sorrow in bereavement which prevails among Eastern nations. There was hardly an hour of the day or night but from some home in Egypt there went up the wail of the bereaved; but here was a simultaneous wail from every home, and that not over the aged or the sick whose death was expected, but over those the great majority of whom would be young, strong, and vivacious. Thus the very emotions which produced this extraordinary cry, the cry itself served in turn to intensify, and thus to exalt into complete mastery. What wonder, then, that from the king downward the people were swept away by their emotions, and, without thought of past gains or future losses, hurried Israel out of their land in the precipitate way here recorded! Avarice, pride, worldly consequence—all the motives which hold dominion in selfish human breasts—lost their seats for the moment. It was only for a moment, but that moment was time long enough effectually to serve the purposes of God. 4. There was the fact that with all these elements of force and terror in the tenth plague itself, *there had been nine such serious visitations before it.* It was like the last blow of the battering-ram, which, though it may have in itself more force than preceding blows, yet gains not the least part of its efficiency from the shaking which these preceding blows have produced. It is by no means certain that if this destruction of the first-born had come at first it would have had the same effect.

II. Notice, as illustrated by this announcement to Pharaoh, HOW DIFFERENTLY THE SAME FACTS ARE STATED TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. Pharaoh is plainly told, that amid all this great smiting of Egypt's first-born, Israel will continue perfectly secure. The impression we get is, that not only will there be freedom for Israel from the specific effects of this plague, but even an unusual exemption from ordinary mischances. Not a dog is to move his tongue against any living creature in Israel. The protection would be complete; the favour and discrimination of Jehovah most manifest. But whence all this came, and in what it consisted, Pharaoh cannot be informed. The difference between Israel and Egypt will be plain enough; but the virtue of the slain lamb and the sprinkled blood are hidden from his eyes—all this could not be explained to him. If it could have been explained to him, it would never have needed to be explained. In other words, Pharaoh would never have come into such an extremity as that where the death of the first-born landed him. Thus we are helped to see the reason why to some there come revelations producing security and gladness of heart, and to others nothing but tidings of disaster and disappointment. Every great fact of God's dealings has a bright side and a dark side; and if we will not live so that the bright side may be revealed to us, then inevitably we must come face to face with the dark one. Moses told Pharaoh that the death of the first-born was coming, but he only turned away more scornful, stubborn, and infatuated than ever; he told the children of Israel to make the Paschal preparations, and, minute and exact as these preparations were, they at once went away and made them. God might have told Pharaoh all about how Israel was protected, but what would have been the use? If we would discover why great Divine revelations are hidden from us, we must look in our own hearts. A man can

never know the comforts and beauties that belong to the temperate zone as long as he stubbornly abides in the frigid one.

III. CONSIDER THIS LAST PLAGUE IN THE ACTUAL EFFECTS OF IT. 1. It produced *immediate action on the part of Pharaoh*, and, what is very noticeable, *on the part of the people also*. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron *by night*. He had sent them away with a menace of death, if they ventured again into his presence; but only a few short hours pass and he has to beg them to hurry and save him. We should never threaten and bluster, for we know not how soon we may have to swallow our words again. He did not wait till morning, even till the early morning. Every moment would bring to him news from a widening circle, and quicken him into the promptest action possible. And yet, immediate as this action appears, we know that it had been led up to very gradually. Jehovah had been for a long time undermining the strength of Pharaoh; and if it now collapsed in a moment instead of crumbling away, it was because the massive fabric had lost, bit by bit, the foundation on which it had been raised. And in the same way we may be sure that everything in the world which is unjust, ungodly, and tyrannical, is being undermined. There is no proud and stubborn soul but God is working upon it by something substantially the same as the nine plagues; and the tenth plague will come in due time to produce its immediate and decisive effect. 2. *The action took the shape of complete and eager liberation*. Egypt was filled with panic and terror to the exclusion of every other motive. The full significance of Pharaoh's words in vers. 31, 32, can only be seen by comparing them, *first*, with his contemptuous treatment of Moses in the beginning (ch. v. 2); and *next*, with his procrastinating, half-giving, half-grasping attitude during the course of the plagues (ch. viii. 10, 25; x. 8—11, 24). Pharaoh began as one whose foot was on the rock—he was sure he could not be shaken; then he was made to feel himself as more and more in a state of unstable equilibrium; and now at last he is utterly prostrate at Moses' feet. He who said he would grant nothing, now grants everything. He who, in response to the first request of Moses, added to the severities of the bondage already existing, now, when all requests have ceased, not only undoes the fetters, but hurries the captives out of his realm, as if each of them was a mass of fatal infection.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 9—10.—Before proceeding to relate the last and greatest of the plagues, the author allows himself a momentary pause while he casts his eye back on the whole series of miracles hitherto wrought in Egypt, on the circumstances under which they had been wrought, their failure to move the stubborn will of Pharaoh, and the cause of that failure, the hardening of his heart, which hardening the author once more ascribes to Jehovah. With this summary he terminates the second great division of his work, that which began with ch. ii., and which traces the history of Moses from his birth to the close of his direct dealings with Pharaoh.

Ver. 9.—And the Lord said. Rather, “had said.” God had forewarned Moses that Pharaoh’s heart would be hardened (ch. iv. 21; vii. 3), and that, in spite of all the miracles which he was empowered to perform before him, he would not let the people go (ch. iii. 19; iv. 21). It was not until God took Pharaoh’s punishment altogether into his own hands, and himself came down and

snote all the first-born, that the king’s obstinacy was overcome, and he proceeded to “thrust the people out.” That my wonders may be multiplied. Compare ch. iii. 20; vii. 3. If Pharaoh had yielded at the first, or even after two or three miracles, God’s greatness and power would not have been shown forth very remarkably. Neither the Egyptians nor the neighbouring nations would have been much impressed. The circumstances would soon have been forgotten. As it was, the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart, while it delayed the departure of the Israelites for a year, and so added to their sufferings, was of advantage to them in various ways:—1. It gave them time to organise them selves, and make all necessary preparations for a sudden departure. 2. It deeply impressed the Egyptians, and led them to abstain from all interference with the Israelites for above three centuries. 3. It impressed the neighbouring nations also to some extent, and either prevented them from offering opposition to the Israelites, or made them contend with less heart, and so with less success against them.

Ver. 10.—Moses and Aaron did all these plagues before Pharaoh. Aaron’s agency is

not always mentioned, and seems to have been less marked in the later than in the earlier miracles, Moses gradually gaining self-reliance. In passing from the subject of the plagues wrought by the two brothers, it may be useful to give a synopsis of them, distinguishing

those which came without warning from those which were announced beforehand, and noting, where possible, their actual worker, their duration, their physical source, and the hurt which they did.

Plagues.	Announced or Not.	Actual Worker.	Duration.	Physical Source.	Hurt which they did.
1. River turned into blood }	announced	Aaron	7 days	water	annoyance to man and beast
2. Frogs	do.	do.	unknown	do.	annoyance to man.
3. Mosquitoes	not	do.	do.	{dust of the earth }	annoyance to man and beast.
—					
4. Beetles	announced	God	do.	air (?)	annoyance and loss to man.
5. Murrain	do.	do.	do.	do.	loss to man.
6. Boils	not	Moses	do.	{ashes of the furnace }	suffering to man and beast.
—					
7. Hail	announced	do.	do.	air	loss to man.
8. Locusts	do.	do.	do.	east wind	do.
9. Darkness	not	do.	3 days	air (?)	annoyance and horror to man.

HOMILETICS.

Man's ill-doing but causes God's wonders to be multiplied (ver. 9). God's wonders are either such as occur in the general course of his providence, or such as are abnormal and extraordinary. It is these last of which Moses especially speaks to us in the Book of Exodus. But the same law which applies to the abnormal wonders, applies also to those which are constant and ordinary. Men's perverseness leads to their multiplication.

I. PARDON OF SIN IS MULTIPLIED THROUGH HUMAN TRANSGRESSION. Nothing is a greater marvel than God's pardon of sin. How "the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity"—he who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"—can pardon sin, is one of those mysteries which must ever remain—in this life, at any rate—unfathomable. Man pardons his fellow-sinner without much difficulty, because he is his fellow-sinner—because he feels that he is himself so much in need of forgiveness. But for a perfect Being to pardon what is utterly alien to his own nature, what he must despise and abhor, what in his eyes is vile, base, mean, wicked, despicable, detestable—is a truth which faith may accept, but which reason is quite incompetent to understand. Yet God does pardon. St. Paul must have been pardoned his persecution of the saints, before he was called to be "a chosen vessel." God bids us ask for pardon, and he would not bid us ask for that which he could not or would not give. And the marvel of pardon is being daily augmented, heaped up, multiplied, by the ever-increasing sum of human transgression.

II. GOD THE SPIRIT'S CONDESCENSION GROWS AND INCREASES THROUGH THE SAME. God the Father declared once upon a time, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3). Yet near five thousand years have elapsed, and his Spirit strives still. Man turns away from his Spirit, "grieves" him, vexes him, is deaf to his pleadings, sets at naught his counsel, wills none of his reprimands (Prov. i. 25)—yet he does not

withdraw himself. He "gives us the comfort of his help again"—he "will not leave us, nor forsake us." We may, no doubt, if we persist in evil courses, and set to work determinedly to drive him from us, in course of time cause him to withdraw, alienate him wholly, "quench" him. But, short of such alienation, our sins do but cause him to multiply the wonders of his love and his long-suffering, to be ever more gracious and more merciful, to plead with us more persuasively, more constantly, and save us, as it were, in spite of ourselves.

III. CHRIST'S PROTECTION OF HIS CHURCH IS SHOWN MORE AND MORE MARVELLOUSLY AS ITS ASSAILANTS INCREASE IN POWER AND BOLDNESS. In prosperous times God seems to do little for his Church; but let danger come, let men rise up against it, let Gebal and Ammon and Amalek be confederate together, and raise the cry, "Down with it, down with it, even to the ground," and the wonders which he proceeds to work on its behalf are simply astounding. Arius would corrupt its doctrine with the Court at his back, and Arius is smitten in the dead of the night by a death as silent, sudden, and inscrutable as that which came in the time of Moses on all the first-born of the Egyptians. Julian would crush it by depriving its ministers of support and its members of education, and Julian is cut off in the flower of his age by the javelin of an unknown enemy. Atheism, Agnosticism, Rationalism, Materialism, and open immorality league themselves against it at the present day, and lo! from without evidences are made to rise up out of crumbling heaps of rubbish in Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt; while from within is developed a new life, a new zeal, a new vigour and activity, which give sure promise of triumph over the coalition. Man's opposition to God provokes God to arise and show forth his might, to confound and scatter his foes. So men may be led at last to know that he, whose name is Jehovah, is truly "the Most High over all the earth" (Ps. lxxxiii. 18).

SECTION VI.

FIRST INSTITUTION OF THE PASSEOVER.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSEOVER AND THE REASONS FOR IT.—In the interval allowed by God, according to the precedent of former announced plagues, between the warning concerning the first-born and the execution, Moses received instructions for the institution of a new religious rite, founded possibly upon some previous national usage, but so re-shaped, re-cast, and remodelled as to have an entirely new and fresh character. In all Eastern nations, the coming in of spring was observed as a joyous and festive time, with offerings, processions, and songs of rejoicings. When the date of the vernal equinox was known, it was naturally made the starting-point for these festivities. Early flowers and fruits, the fresh ears of the most forward kinds of grain, or the grain itself extracted from the ears, were presented as thank-offerings in the temples; hymns were sung, and acknowledgments made of God's goodness. Such a festival was celebrated

each year in Egypt; and it is so consonant to man's natural feelings, that, if the family of Jacob did not bring the observance with them from Palestine, they are likely to have adopted it, when they became to some extent agriculturists (Deut. xi. 10) under the Pharaohs. It is, however, a pure conjecture (Ewald) that the name given to this festival was *Pesach*, from the sun's "passing over" at this time into the sign of Aries. The real name is unknown, and there is every reason to believe that the term *Pesach* was now for the first time given a religious sense (upon the ground noticed in verses 11, 12) to what was in reality a new rite. God, being about to smite with death the first-born in each Egyptian house, required the Israelites to save themselves by means of a sacrifice. Each Israelite householder was to select a lamb (or a kid) on the tenth day of the current month (ver. 3), and to keep it separate from the flock until the fourteenth day at even, when he was to kill it, to dip some hyssop in the blood (ver. 22) and to strike with the hy-

sop on the two posts and lintel of his doorway (ver. 7), so leaving the mark of the blood on it. He was then the same night to roast the lamb whole, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (vers. 8—10). He was to have his dress close girt about him, his sandals on his feet, and his staff in his hand; to be prepared, that is, for a journey. If he did all this, God, when he went through the land to smite and destroy, would "pass over" the house upon which there was the blood, and spare all that dwelt in it. Otherwise the plague would be upon them to destroy them (vers. 11, 13). Such were the directions given for immediate observance, and such was the Passover proper. The lamb itself was primarily the *Pesach* (ver. 11), the "pass," which secured safety. From this the name spread to the entire festival. Having, by the directions recorded in verses 3—13 instituted the festival, God proceeded, in verses 14—20, to require its continued celebration year after year, and to give additional rules as to the mode of its annual observance.

1. The festival was to last seven days. 2. No leavened bread was to be eaten during that space, and leaven was even to be put away altogether out of all houses. 3. On the first day of the seven and on the last, there was to be "a holy convocation" or gathering for worship. 4. No work not strictly necessary was to be done on these days. Other directions were given at a later date. 1. Besides the Paschal lamb, with which the festival commenced, and which was to be a domestic rite, public sacrifices were appointed for each day of the seven—to consist of two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs, and one goat, with appropriate "meat-offerings" (Num. xxviii. 19—24). 2. On the second day of the feast, "the morrow after the sabbath," the first fruits of the harvest were to be presented in the shape of a ripe sheaf (of barley) which was to be a wave-offering, and to be accompanied by the sacrifice of a lamb with meat and drink offerings (Lev. xxiii. 10—14). By this regulation the festival was made to embody the old spring feast, and to have thus a double aspect.

Ver. 1.—The Lord spake.—According to the Biblical record, neither Moses nor Aaron introduced any legislation of their own, either at this time or later. The whole system, religious, political, and ecclesiastical,

was received by Divine Revelation, commanded by God, and merely established by the agency of the two brothers. In the land of Egypt. The introduction of these words seems to show that we have here a separate document on the subject of the Passover, written independently of what has preceded, some time after the exodus, and placed here without alteration, when Moses gathered together his various writings into a single work.

Ver. 2.—This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. The Israelite year would seem to have hitherto commenced with the autumnal equinox (Ex. xxiii. 16), or at any rate with the month Tisri (or Ethanim), which corresponded to our October. Henceforth two reckonings were employed, one for sacred, the other for civil purposes, the first month of each year, sacred or civil, being the seventh month of the other. Abib, "the month of ears"—our April, nearly—became now the first month of the ecclesiastical year, while Tisri became its seventh or sabbatical month. It is remarkable that neither the Egyptians nor the Babylonians agreed with the original Israelite practice, the Egyptians commencing their year with Thoth, or July; and the Babylonians and Assyrians theirs with Nisannu, or April.

Ver. 3.—Speak ye unto all the congregation. Under the existing circumstances Moses could only venture to summon the elders of Israel to a meeting. He necessarily left it to them to signify his wishes to the people. (See ver. 21.) A lamb. The Hebrew word is one of much wider meaning than our "lamb." It is applicable to both sheep and goats, and to either animal without limit of age. In the present case the age was fixed at a year by subsequent enactment (ver. 5); but the offerer was left free with respect to the species. It is curious that, such being the case, the lamb alone should, so far as appears, ever have been offered. According to the house of their fathers. Literally, "for a father's house," i. e. for a family.

Ver. 4.—If the household be too little for the lamb—i. e., "too few to consume it at a sitting." Usage in course of time fixed the minimum number at ten. (Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 9, § 3.) The whole family, men, women and children participated. The lamb was generally slain between the ninth hour (3 p.m.) and the eleventh (5 p.m.). Let him and his neighbour take it according to the number of the souls. If there were a household of only five, which could not possibly consume the lamb, any large neighbouring family was to send five or six of its number, to make up the deficiency. Every man according to his eating, etc. It is difficult to see what sense our translators intended. The real direction is that, in providing a proper number of

guests, consideration should be had of the amount which they would be likely to eat. Children and the very aged were not to be reckoned as if they were men in the vigour of life. Translate—"Each man according to his eating shall ye count towards the lamb."

Ver. 5.—Your lamb shall be without blemish. Natural piety would teach that "the blind, the lame, and the sick" should not be selected for sacrifice (Mal. i. 8). The Law afterwards expressly forbade any blemished animals—"blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed"—to be offered for any of the stated sacrifices, though they might be given as free-will offerings (Lev. xxii. 20—25). The absence of blemish was especially important in a victim which was to typify One "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." A male. As standing in place of and redeeming the first-born of the males in each family. Of the first year. Perhaps as then more approaching to the ideal of perfect innocence. The requirement was not a usual one. Or from the goats. Theodoret says the proviso was made for the relief of the poorer class of persons; but practically it seems not to have taken effect. When people were poor, their richer neighbours supplied them with lambs (Kalisch).

Ver. 6.—Ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day. The interval of four days (see ver. 3) was probably intended to give ample time for the thorough inspection of the lamb, and for obtaining another, if any defect was discovered. The precept is not observed by the modern Jews; and the later Targum (which belongs to the sixth century after Christ) teaches that it was only intended to apply to the first institution; but the text of Exodus is wholly against this. The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it. One of the main peculiarities of the Paschal sacrifice was this—that the head of each family was entitled—in the early times was required—to offer the sacrifice for himself. In it no one intervened between the individual and God. Thus it was recognised that the whole nation was a nation of priests, as are Christians also, according to St. John (Rev. i. 6) and St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5). The intervention of Levites at a late date (2 Chron. xxx. 17; xxxv. 5, &c.) was contrary to the original institution. In the evening. Literally, "between the two evenings." This phrase has been explained in two ways. Some regard the first evening as commencing when the sun begins visibly to decline from the zenith, i.e. about two or three o'clock; and the second as following the sunset. Others say, that the sunset introduces the first evening, and that the second begins when the twilight ends, which they consider to have been "an hour and twenty minutes later" (Ebn Ezra, quoted

by Kalisch). The use of the phrase in ch. xvi. 12, and the command in Deut. xvi. 6—"Thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun," seem to be decisive in favour of the second explanation. The first arose out of the later practice. When the lambs were sacrificed in the temple by a continual succession of offerers, it became impossible to complete the sacrifices in the short time originally allowed. Of necessity the work of killing the victims was commenced pretty early in the afternoon, and continued till after sunset. The interpretation of the direction was then altered, to bring it into accord with the altered practice.

Ver. 7.—They shall take of the blood. The blood, which, according to Hebrew ideas, "is the life," and so the very essence of the sacrifice, was always regarded as the special symbol of that expiation and atonement, with a view to which sacrifice was instituted. As by the Paschal sacrifice atonement was made for the house, which was therefore to escape unscathed, the sign of atonement was to be conspicuously placed upon it. And strike. The "striking" was to be by means of a bunch of hyssop dipped in the blood (ver. 22). The selection of the doorway as the part of the house to receive the stains of blood is probably to be connected with the idea that the secondary agency producing death, whatever it was, would enter by the door—and if the door showed the house to have been atoned for, would not enter. The upper door-post. The word used is elsewhere translated "lintel" (ch. xii. 22, 23); but it seems properly to mean the latticed window which was commonly placed over a doorway in Egyptian houses, and which is often represented in the façades of tombs. (See Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, pt. ii. pls. 16, 17, 147, etc.) It is derived from a root signifying "to look out."

Ver. 8.—Roast with fire. The meat of sacrificial meals was commonly boiled by the Hebrews (1 Sam. ii. 14, 15). The command to roast the Paschal lamb is accounted for: 1. By its being a simpler and quicker process than boiling; 2. By a special sanctity being regarded as attaching to fire; 3. By the difficulty of cooking the animal whole unless it were roasted. Justin Martyr's statement that for roasting two wooden spits were required, placed at right angles the one to the other, and thus extending the victim on a cross, will seem to many a better ground for the direction than any of these. And unleavened bread. See below, ver. 18. With bitter herbs. Literally, "with bitter-nesses." That herbs, or vegetables of some kind, are intended, there is no reasonable doubt. The Mishna enumerates endive, chicory, wild lettuce, and nettles among the herbs that might be eaten. It is a strange notion of Kurtz's, that the bitter herbs were

a condiment, and "communicated a more agreeable flavour to the food." Undoubtedly they were a disagreeable accompaniment, and represented at once the bitterness of the Egyptian bondage (ch. i. 14) and the need of self-denial, if we would feed on Christ.

Ver. 9.—**Eat not of it raw.** The injunction appears to moderns superfluous; but an *συνάφαιλα*, or eating of the raw flesh of victims sacrificed, seems to have been practised by several heathen nations in ancient times, more especially in the worship of Dionysus or Bacchus. Its head with its legs. The lamb was to be roasted whole—according to some, as a symbol of the unity of Israel, and especially of the political unit which they were to become so soon as they quitted Egypt; but, as we learn from St. John (xix. 36), still more to prefigure the unbroken body of Him whom the lamb especially represented, the true propitiation and atonement and deliverer of His people from the destroyer, our Lord Jesus Christ. The putrefaction thereof. Rather, "the intestines thereof." The Jewish commentators say that the intestines were first taken out, washed, and cleansed, after which they were replaced, and the lamb roasted in a sort of oven.

Ver. 10.—**Ye shall let nothing of it remain till the morning.** The whole of the flesh was to be consumed by the guests, and at one sitting, lest there should be any even accidental profanation of the food by man or animal, if part were put away. The English Church, acting on the same principle of careful reverence, declines to allow any reservation of the Eucharistic elements, requiring the whole of the consecrated bread and wine to be consumed by the Priest and communicants in the Church immediately after the service. That which remaineth—i.e., the bones, and any small fragments of the flesh necessarily adhering to them. **Ye shall burn with fire.** Thus only could its complete disappearance, and seeming annihilation be secured. It does not appear that this burning was viewed as a sacrificial act.

Ver. 11.—**With your loins girded, etc.** Completely prepared, i.e., to start on your journey—with the loose wrapper (*beget*), ordinarily worn, collected together and fastened by a girdle about the waist; with sandals on the feet, which were not commonly worn in houses; and with walking-sticks in the hand. There were some Jews who regarded these directions as of perpetual obligation; but the general view was that they applied to the first occasion only, when alone they would have answered any useful purpose. You shall eat it in haste. As not knowing at what moment you may be summoned to start on your journey, and as having to see to the burning of the bones after the flesh was eaten, which would take some time.

It is the Lord's Passover. Very emphatic words! "This is no common meal," they seem to say, "it is not even an ordinary sacrificial repast. The lamb is Jehovah's. It is his pass-sign—the mark of his protection, the precious means of your preservation from death. As such view it; and though ye eat it in haste, eat it with reverence."

Ver. 12.—**For I will pass through, etc.** God now proceeds to give the reason for the institution of the new ceremony, and to explain the new term *pesach*. "I have commanded this rite," He says, "because I am about to go through the whole land of Egypt as a destroyer, executing judgment; I am about to smite and kill every one of the first-born both of man and beast. I shall enter into every house, and slay the first-born in it, unless I see upon the house the token of the blood of the lamb. In that case I shall pass over the house, and you will escape the plague." It would clear the sense if the opening words of verse 12 were translated—"For I shall go through," instead of "pass through." The word translated "pass through" has no connection at all with that rendered "pass over." Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. These words are exegetical of the word "beast," which immediately precedes. Animal worship was an important part of the religion of the Egyptians. At four great cities, Memphis, Heliopolis, Hermouthis, a sort of suburb of Thebes, and Momemphis in the Western Delta, animals were maintained, which were viewed as actual incarnations of deity—the Apis Bull at Memphis, a bull called Mnevis at Heliopolis, one termed Bacis or Pacis at Hermouthis, and at Momemphis a White Cow. If any of these were at the time animals that had "opened the womb," death must have fallen upon them. Thus would judgment have been executed, literally, upon Egyptian "gods." But, besides these, the whole country was filled with sacred animals, regarded as emblematic of certain particular deities, and as belonging to them. Sheep were sacred to Kneph, goats to Khem, cows to Athor, cats to Pasht, dogs and jackals to Anubis, lions to Horus, crocodiles to Set and Sabak, hippopotami to Taouris, cynocephalous apes to Thoth, frogs to Heka. A sudden mortality among the sacred animals would be felt by the Egyptians as a blow struck against the gods to whom they belonged, and as a judgment upon them. It is scarcely necessary to understand literally the expression "all the gods," and to defend it by the assertion that "not a single deity of Egypt but was represented by some beast." Such an assertion cannot be proved; and is probably not correct. It has often been remarked, and is generally allowed, that Scripture uses universal expressions, where most

or even many, of a class are meant. I am the Lord. Rather as in ch. vi. 8, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment, I, Jehovah."

Ver. 13.—The blood shall be to you for a token, etc. The blood was not to be a token to the Israelites, but to God for them. Translate—"and the blood shall be as a token for you upon the houses that you are there." It shall distinguish the houses in which you dwell from the others. I will pass over you. This is the emphatic clause. God would pass by, or over the house on which the blood was, spare it, slay none of its inmates; and from this action of His, the lamb itself, and the feast whereof it was the principal part, were to be termed "the Passover." It has been proposed to connect the Hebrew *peshach* with the Egyptian *pesh*, "to stretch, or extend (protection)"; but the name "Tiph-sach," borne by the place of passage over the Euphrates (1 Kings iv. 24), would seem to indicate that "crossing," or "passing over" is the primary meaning of the root.

Vers. 14—20.—Hitherto the directions given have had reference, primarily and mainly, if not wholly, to the first celebration of the Passover on the night preceding the Exodus. Now, it is announced, (1) That the observance is to be an annual one; and (2) That it is to be accompanied with certain additional features in the future. These are (a) the eating of unleavened bread for seven days after the killing of the Passover; (b) the putting away of leaven out of the houses; (c) the holding of meetings for worship on the first day and the last; and (d) the observance on these days of a sabbatical rest.

Ver. 14.—This day shall be to you for a memorial. Annual festivals, in commemoration of events believed to have happened, were common in the religion of Egypt, and probably not wholly strange to the religious ideas of the Hebrews. (See the "Introduction" to this chapter.) They were now required to make the 14th of Abib such a day, and to observe it continually year after year "throughout their generations." There is commendable faithfulness in the obedience still rendered to the command at the present day; and it must be confessed that the strong expression—throughout your generations and as an ordinance for ever—excuse to a great extent the reluctance of the Jews to accept Christianity. They have already, however, considerably varied from the terms of the original appointment. May they not one day see that the Passover will still be truly kept by participation in the Easter eucharist, wherein Christians feed upon "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—the antitype, of which the Paschal lamb was the type—the true sustenance of souls—

the centre and source of all real unity—the one "perfect and sufficient sacrifice, and oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"? The Church requires an Easter communion of all her members, proclaims that on that day, Christ our passover being slain, we are to keep the feast; and thus, so far as in her lies, maintains the festival as "an ordinance for ever," to be observed through all her generations.

Ver. 15.—Seven days There is no indication that the week of seven days was admitted by the ancient Egyptians, or even known to them. Apparently, the nation which first adopted it was that of the Babylonians. Abraham may have brought it with him from "Ur of the Chaldees;" and from him it may have passed to Jacob, and so to Moses. That the week was known in the family of Abraham before the giving of the law, appears from Gen. xxix. 27, 28. Unleavened bread is typical of purity of heart, leaven being an emblem of corruption (Matt. xvi. 6—12; 1 Cor. v. 7). "Leaven," says Plutarch, "comes from corruption, and corrupts the dough with which it is mixed; and every fermentation seems to be a putrefaction." The primary command to celebrate the first passover with unleavened instead of leavened bread (ver. 8), must be attributed wholly to this symbolism. But the permanent institution of a "feast of unleavened bread," to last a week, had a double bearing. Partly, it was designed to deepen and intensify the conviction that corruption and impurity disqualify for religious service; but it was also partly intended as a commemoration of the fact, that in their hasty flight from Egypt the bread which they took with them was unleavened (ver. 34), and that they were forced to subsist on this for several days. (Compare the double meaning of the "bitter herbs," noticed in the comment on verse 8, *ad fin.*) The requirement to "put away leaven out of their houses" is probably intended to teach, that for family worship to be acceptable, the entire household must be pure, and that to effect this result the head of the household must, so far as he can, eject the leaven of sin from his establishment. Whosoever eateth . . . shall be cut off from Israel. Expelled, i.e., from the congregation, or excommunicated. If a man wilfully transgresses any plain precept of God, even though it be a positive one, he should be severed from the Church, until he confess his fault, and repent, and do penance for it. Such was the "godly discipline" of the primitive Church; and it were well if the Churches of these modern times had more of it.

Ver. 16.—On the first day there shall be an holy convocation. After the Paschal meal on the evening of the 14th of Abib, there was to be a solemn assembly of the people on the

next day for religious worship. The name "convocation," applied to these gatherings, seems to show that originally the people were summoned to such meetings, as they still are by the *muezzin* from the minarets of mosques in Mahommedan countries, and by bells from the steeples of churches in Christian ones. And on the seventh day. On the 22nd of Abib—the seventh day after the first holy convocation on the 15th (see Lev. xxiii. 4—8). Only two of the Jewish festivals were of this duration—the feast of unleavened bread, and the feast of tabernacles (ib. 39—42). The Christian Church has adopted the usage for Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Whitsuntide, where the last day of the week is known technically as "the octave." No manner of work shall be done in them. Festival-days were in all countries days of abstinence from the ordinary business of life, which could not conveniently be carried on conjointly with attendance at the services, meetings, processions, etc., wherein the festival consisted. But absolute cessation from all work was nowhere strictly commanded except among the Hebrews, where it appears to have been connected with the belief in God's absolute rest after the six days of creation. The command here given was solemnly repeated in the law (Lev. xxiii. 6—8).

Ver. 17.—In this self-same day. The 15th of Abib—the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. Have I brought your hosts out. This expression seems to prove that we have in the injunctions of verses 14—20, not the exact words of the revelation on the subject made by God to Moses before the institution of the Passover, but a re-casting of the words after the exodus had taken place. Otherwise, the expression must have been, "I will bring your hosts out." As an ordinance for ever. Easter eve, the day on which Satan was despoiled by the preaching of Jesus to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19), and on which the Church first realises its deliverance from the bondage of sin by the Atonement of Good Friday, is the Christian continuance of the first day of unleavened bread, and so answers to this text, as Good Friday to the similar command in ver. 14.

Ver. 18.—In the first month. The word "month" seems to have accidentally dropt

out of the Hebrew text. In the evening. The Hebrew day commenced with the evening (Gen. i. 5); but the evening here intended is that at the close of the 14th of Abib, which began the 15th. Similarly, the evening of the 21st is here that which commenced the 22nd.

Ver. 19.—This is not a mere "vain repetition" of verse 15. It adds an important extension of the punitive clause—"that soul shall be cut off from Israel"—from Israelites proper to proselytes. We are thus reminded, at the very time when Israel is about to become a nation and to enter upon its inheritance of exclusive privileges, that no exclusion of the Gentiles by reason of race or descent was ever contemplated by God, either at the giving of the law, or at any other time. In Abraham "all the families of them were to be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3). It was always open to any Gentiles to join themselves to Israel by becoming "proselytes of justice," adopting circumcision and the general observance of the law, and joining the Israelite community. The whole law is full of references to persons of this class (Ex. xx. 10; xxiii. 12; Lev. xvi. 29; xvii. 10; xviii. 26 xx. 2; xxiv. 16; Num. xxxv. 15; Deut. v. 14; xvi. 11—14; xxiv. 17, 19; xxvii. 19; xxix. 11, etc.). It must have been largely recruited in the times immediately following the exodus from the "mixed multitude" which accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. xii. 38), and from the Kenites who joined them in the wilderness (Num. x. 29—31; Jud. i. 16). Born in the land—i.e., an Israelite by birth—"the land" is, no doubt, Canaan, which is regarded as the true "Land of Israel" from the time when it was assigned by God to the posterity of Abraham (Gen. xv. 18).

Ver. 20.—Here again there is no repetition, but an extension. "Ye shall eat nothing leavened," not only no leavened bread (ver. 15), but no leavened cake of any kind. And "in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread," i.e., wherever ye dwell, whether in Egypt, or in the wilderness, or in Palestine, or in Babylonia, or in Media, this law shall be observed. So the Jews observe it everywhere to this day, though they no longer sacrifice the Paschal lamb.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—2.—The advantages of an ecclesiastical calendar. With their new position as an independent nation, and their new privileges as God's redeemed people (ch. vi. 6), the Israelites received the gift of a new ecclesiastical calendar. Their civil calendar remaining as before, their civil year commencing with Tisri, about the time of the autumnal equinox, and consisting of twelve months of alternately twenty-nine and thirty days, they were now commanded to adopt a new departure for their sacred year, and to reckon its commencement from Abib or Nisan, which began about the time of the vernal equinox, or March 21. This was advantageous to them in several ways.

I. IT SECURED THEM A TIME OF RELIGIOUS RETROSPECT AND CONTEMPLATION, NOT ALREADY OCCUPIED BY WORLDLY CARES. The commencement of a civil year naturally brings with it various civil and worldly cares, which occupy the mind, demand the attention, and distract the thoughts. The worldly position has to be reviewed, accounts made up, stock taken, debts claimed and paid, subscriptions renewed or discontinued, agents communicated with, orders given, arrangements made in some instances for the whole of the coming twelvemonth; and the result is, that the mind of most men is then so occupied, not to say harassed, that it cannot turn itself with any vigour or freshness to the contemplation of things heavenly and spiritual. Of great value then, and importance, is it that religion should have a separate time to itself for a review of the spiritual position, for the taking of stock in a religious sense, the balancing of the account with heaven, the forming of plans for the spiritual life beforehand, since that life has as much need to be carefully provided for as the worldly life. The opening of a year being the natural time for such a review, the new arrangements made naturally suggested it, and provided a quiet time for it.

II. IT GAVE THE IDEAS CONNECTED WITH THE FESTIVAL ABOUT TO BE INSTITUTED A GREATER HOLD ON MEN'S THOUGHTS THAN MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN THE CASE. Everyone recognises the importance of a new beginning. A religion naturally strikes its key-note at the commencement of its round of services. As the coming of Christ into the world is the very essence of Christianity, the ecclesiastical year of Christendom commences with Advent. Thus Christians are taught that the foundation-stone of their religion, the root out of which it all springs, is the Incarnation. For Mosaism the key-note was deliverance from Egypt, and covenant relationship with God as His people by means of sacrifice. Deliverance from Egypt was redemption from servitude, and the commencement of a free national life. Sacrifice was the appointed means of keeping up and renewing the covenant relationship begun in circumcision. In the Passover these two thoughts were blended together, and Israel had to meditate on both. The one thought was necessary to call forth that loving trust in the favour and goodness of God, which lies at the root of all acceptable service; the other was needed to give ease to the conscience, to reassure the trembling sinner, and remove his sense of a guilt that separated him from God, and made his circumcision unavailing. The prominence given to these ideas by the position of the Paschal Festival, impressed them upon the minds of the Israelites as fundamental and vital truths.

III. IT GAVE THE RELIGION GENERALLY A STATUS AND A POSITION OF INDEPENDENCE, WHICH INCREASED MAN'S RESPECT FOR IT. In all times and countries the suspicion occurs to some, that religion is but a form of statecraft, a politic invention of governors to render government more easy. Anything that marks the co-ordinate authority of Church and State in their separate spheres, and especially the independence of the Church, is valuable, as an obstacle to Erastianism, and an indication of the Church's inherent right to regulate Church affairs. An ecclesiastical calendar distinct from the civil calendar is no doubt a little matter; but it implies an important principle, and is perhaps not without some influence over the general tone of thought and feeling in a country.

Vers. 3-20.—*The Passover Proper.* The Passover may be viewed:—

I. AS A COMMEMORATIVE RITE. Instituted with reference to the tenth plague, and as a means by which the first-born of the Israelites might be saved from destruction, but accompanied by ceremonies which were connected with the prospective departure of the whole nation out of Egypt, the Passover feast, as established "by an ordinance for ever," commemorated two distinct and different things. (1) The passing over of the houses of the Israelites by Jehovah, when he went through the land in the character of "destroyer" (ver. 23), to smite the first-born; and (2) the hurried departure of the nation out of Egypt in the night, with bread for their journey, which they had not had time to leaven (ver. 34). It was thus intended to remind them of two great mercies; the lesser one being the escape of their first-born from sudden death, and the greater one the deliverance of the whole people from the bondage and affliction of Egypt, with the consequence of such deliverance, the establishment of them as a nation under the direct government of God, and under laws which were communicated to them by God himself at Sinai. Man is so apt to forget the benefits which God confers upon him, that it has

been found necessary, or at least desirable, in almost all countries, to establish, by authority, days of commemoration, when national deliverances, national triumphs, national recoveries, shall be brought prominently before the mind of the nation, and pressed upon its attention. The Passover must be regarded as one of the most effective of such commemorative ceremonies. It has continued to be celebrated for above three thousand years. It brings vividly to the recollection of the Jew that night of trepidation and excitement, when the lamb was first killed, the blood dashed upon the doorposts, and the sequel waited for—that night, when “about midnight” was heard “a great cry,” and in every house the Egyptians bewailed one dead—that night, in which, after the cry, a murmur arose, and the Egyptians became “urgent” (ver. 33), and insisted that the Israelites should quit the land forthwith. It has all the political advantage of a great national celebration; and it exalts the political idea by uniting it with religious enthusiasm.

II. AS A FEAST OF THANKSGIVING. The sacrifices of the Paschal week, with the exception of the Paschal lamb and the daily goat, must be viewed as thank-offerings. They consisted of fourteen bullocks, seven rams, and forty-nine lambs of the first year, provided by the priests, and offered to God in the name of the nation. They were burnt on the altar as holocausts, accompanied by meat-offerings of flour mingled with oil. At the same time individuals offered their own private thank-offerings. So far, the special object of the thanksgiving was the great deliverance, with which might be conjoined, in thought, God’s further mercies in the history of the nation. On the second day of the feast, however, another subject of thankfulness was introduced. The season of the year was that in which the earliest grain ripened in Palestine; according to a conjecture already made, it was the time when the return of spring had been long celebrated among the Semites by a traditional observance. As “each return of the Passover festival was intended to remind the Israelites of their national regeneration” (Kalisch), it was thought appropriate to bring the festival into connection with the regeneration of nature, and the return of vernal vegetation. On the second day, therefore, a sheaf of the first ripe barley was offered as the first-fruits of the coming harvest, and thanks were rendered to God for his bounty in once more bringing to perfection the fruits of the earth. During the remainder of the week, both subjects occupied the thoughts of the worshippers, who passed the time in innocent festivities, as songs, music, and dancing.

III. AS A SYMBOLICAL CEREMONY. We have not to guess at the symbolical meaning of the Passover, as of so much that is contained in the Jewish law. Scripture distinctly declares it. “Christ, *our Passover*, is slain,” says St. Paul; “therefore let us keep the feast.” Christ, who was prefigured and foreshown in every sacrifice, was symbolised especially by the Paschal victim. He was “the Lamb of God” (John i. 29), “without spot or blemish” (1 Peter i. 19), “holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb. vii. 26); offered to keep off “the destroyer,” saving us by His blood from death (Acts xx. 28); slain that we might feed upon His flesh (John vi. 51). The Paschal lamb, when prepared for sacrifice, presented, as Justin Martyr informs us, a lively image of the Saviour upon “the accursed tree,” being extended on a cross formed of two wooden spits, one longitudinal, and one transverse, placed at right angles each to the other. “Not a bone of it was to be broken,” that it might the better typify Him whom God preserved from this indignity (Ps. xxxiv. 20; John xix. 33). It was to be consumed entirely, as Christ is to be taken entire into the heart of the faithful (Gal. iv. 19). Scripture also distinctly declares the symbolical meaning of the unleavened bread. “Let us keep the feast,” says St. Paul, “not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” He who would feed on Christ must first put away from him all corruption and impurity, eject all leaven out of the house wherein his spirit dwells, make himself fit to sit down at that heavenly banquet, by getting rid of all those “evil things which come from within, and defile the man” (Mark vii. 23). There may be some doubt, however, as to the symbolism of the “bitter herbs,” which Scripture leaves unexplained. The exegesis, that the bitter herbs symbolised the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt, if taken as exhausting the meaning, is unsatisfactory. The memory of past sufferings inflicted by others is not a necessary accompaniment of present festal joy, though it may enhance that joy by contrast. The “bitterness” should be something that is always requisite before the soul can find in Christ rest,

peace, and enjoyment—something that must ever accompany that rest, peace, and enjoyment, and, so long as we are in the flesh, remain inseparable from it. Two things of this kind suggest themselves—repentance and self-denial. The bitter herbs may perhaps symbolise both, pointing on the one hand to the important truth, that real repentance is a continuous act, never ceasing, while we live below, and on the other of the necessity of men's "taking up their cross *daily*," and striving towards perfectness through suffering.

Ver. 14.—*The Passover continued in the Eucharist.*—It was expressly declared that the Passover was instituted to be observed as a feast "by an ordinance for ever." Jews are justified in remaining Jews, if they cannot otherwise continue to celebrate it. But they can. The Passover is continued in the Eucharist. Hence St. Paul's words at Easter time—"Christ, our Passover, is crucified for us; therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8).

I. THE EUCHARIST IS THE AFTER COMMEMORATION OF THE EVENT, WHICH THE PASSOVER PREFIGURED AND FORESHADOWED. The reality underlying both being the Lord's death upon the cross as a propitiation for the sins of man, this death was set forth in anticipation by the Paschal sacrifice; it is now "shown forth" after the event, in the Eucharist, "until Christ come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). The bread and wine represent the humanity of Christ as truly as the Paschal lamb represented it. The Eucharistic ceremony is "a perpetual memory (*ἀνάμνησις*) of his precious death," and in some respects a more lively setting forth of that central event of history than ever was the Paschal ceremony.

II. THE EUCHARIST SETS FORTH THE CHRISTIAN'S DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE, AS THE PASSOVER DID THE JEW'S. The true bondage is the bondage of sin. This is the "Egypt" from which man requires to be delivered. The death of Christ, which the Eucharist "shews forth," is the one and only remedy for sin, the one and only means whereby it becomes possible for man to shake off the grievous yoke from his shoulders, and become free. By His meritorious sacrifice the guilt of sin is removed; by His assisting grace, given most abundantly through the Eucharist, the power of sin is destroyed, and its taint gradually purged out of our nature.

III. THE EUCHARIST IS A FEAST OF THANKSGIVING TO THE CHRISTIAN, AS THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL WAS TO THE JEW. The very name of Eucharist, which became the usual name of the Holy Communion as early as the second century, indicates how essential a feature of it thanksgiving was felt to be. "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thee thanks for thy great glory, O Lord God"—this is the general key-note of Eucharistic services. And naturally. For, if the Jew had much to thank God for, the Christian has more. Redemption, justification, assisting grace, sanctification, union with Christ—clear and distinct promise of everlasting life—are his, and crowd upon his mind in connection with this sacrament.

IV. THE EUCHARIST, LIKE THE PASSOVER, IS A FEAST UPON A SACRIFICE. In the Passover, as generally in sacrifices, the victim was first offered on behalf of the sacrificers—in this case the household, and then the flesh of the victim furnished a solemn sacrificial meal to the members of the household. In the Eucharist, where the true victim is Christ himself, whose sacrifice upon the cross is alone propitiatory, a commemoration of the death of Christ is made, and then there follows a feast of the most sacred kind. Whatever benefits may have flowed from participation in the Paschal festival are far exceeded by those attached to the "Supper of the Lord." The Jew felt himself by participation in the Passover festival incorporated anew into the community of Israel; the Christian, by worthy participation in the Eucharist, is engrafted anew into Christ.

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HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*The beginning of months.* The exodus from Egypt was the birthday of the nation of Israel. In commemoration of this great event, the day from which the (religious) year began was changed. The month Abib was thenceforth to be "the beginning of months." The civil year continued to begin with Tisri (cf. ch. xxiii. 16).

I. REDEMPTION, THE TRUE STARTING-POINT OF HUMAN EXISTENCE. The day when

salvation comes to a man's house (Luke xix. 9; Acts xvi. 34) is the true "beginning of days" to him. 1. It is *the commencement of a new life*. "Born again" (John iii. 3); "passed from death into life" (John v. 24); "a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). "The years we spent before we turned to the Lord are not worth counting; the best that can happen to them is to be buried out of sight" (Dr. J. M. Gibson). 2. It is *the day of separation from the world*. Some think that up to this time the Israelites had used the Egyptian calendar, which began about the time of the summer solstice. From this time, however, all connection with Egypt was to be broken off, and the commencement of the sacred year was to commemorate the time when Jehovah led them forth to liberty and independence" (Geikie). 3. It is *the day which begins the journey to heaven*. Redemption is the beginning of the new life: it is, however, but the beginning. The wilderness journey follows it. Conversion is not a resting-place, but a starting-point. It begins, but does not complete, salvation.

II. TIME, A MEMORIALIST OF GOD'S MIGHTY WORKS. Even on so immaterial a thing as time, God has inscribed a memorial of His three greatest works. 1. *Creation*. He has built into the structure of the week an imperishable record of the six days' work. 2. *The Exodus*. The order of the year in Israel was made to testify to the deliverance from Egypt. 3. *The Christian redemption*. The advent of Christ has founded an era. The bitterest enemy of the Gospel is compelled to do it, at least, the involuntary homage of dating his years from the Lord's advent. By his use of the Christian calendar, the infidel testifies unwittingly to the power of the religion which he seeks to overthrow.

III. THE SPHERES OF THE SACRED AND THE CIVIL ARE DISTINCT. One indication of this, even in the polity of Israel, is seen in the fact that the sacred year began in one month, and the civil in another.—J. O.

Vers. 1—29.—*The Passover*. God's last and overwhelming blow was about to be struck at Egypt. In anticipation of that blow, and in immediate connection with the exodus, God gave directions for the observance of a Passover.

I. THE PASSOVER IN ITS CONNECTION WITH THE HISTORY. For details of the ritual, see the verses of the chapter. 1. The *design* of the Passover was to make plain to Israel the ground on which its salvation was bestowed—the ground, viz., of Atonement. "The more recent plagues had fallen on Egypt alone. The children of Israel were saved from them. But though the salvation was obvious, the way of salvation had not yet been indicated. But now that the last and heaviest plague is about to fall, not only will Israel be saved from it, but the ground on which (the whole) salvation is bestowed will be made plain." 2. The connection of the Passover with the *exodus*. In this relation it is to be viewed more especially as a *purificatory sacrifice*. Such a sacrifice was peculiarly appropriate on the night of leaving Egypt, and one would probably have been appointed, even had no such special reason existed for it as the judgment on the first-born. 3. The connection of the Passover with the *judgment on the first-born*. Israel was God's Son, His firstborn (ch. x. 22), and is in turn represented by his first-born; and so with Egypt. Because Pharaoh would not let Israel (God's first-born) go, God had declared his purpose of smiting "all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast" (ver. 12); the punishment in this case, as frequently in God's providence (cf. Is. xxx. 16), taking a form analogous to the sin it is designed to chastise. "The first-born represented the family, so that judgment of the first-born stood for judgment upon all, and redemption of the first-born stood for the redemption of all" (Dr. Gibson). Accordingly, not the firstborn merely, but the entire household, as represented in him, was redeemed by the blood of the Passover, and joined in the subsequent feast upon the lamb (ver. 8). Note, there was a peculiar fitness in the Passover being instituted at this particular crisis. (1) The death of the first-born was a judgment pure and simple; not, like the hail, locusts, etc., an *admonitory* plague. (2) It gave a heightened and impressive character to the salvation that redemption by blood, redemption by power, and the emergence of the people from slavery into distinct existence as a people of God, were thus seen going hand in hand. The analogy with the Christian redemption is obvious. 4. The *teaching* of the Passover. It taught the people (1) that *naturally they were as justly exposed to wrath as the people of Egypt*. "Whether viewed in their individual or in their collective

capacity, they were themselves of Egypt—collectively, a part of the nation, without any separate and independent existence of their own, vassals of the enemy, and inhabitants of the doomed territory—individually, also, partakers of the guilt and corruption of Egypt" (Fairbairn). "If the test had been one of character, it is quite certain that the line would not have been run so as to range all Egypt on the one side, and all Israel on the other. No one can suppose that all the real worth and excellence were on the side of the latter, and all the meanness and wickedness on the side of the former. In fact, the children of Israel had shared only too deeply in the sins of Egypt, and, accordingly, if they are to be saved, it must be on some other ground than their own merits" (Gibson). (2) *That the medium of their salvation—the ground on which it was bestowed—was blood of atonement.* It is vain to deny that the Passover victim was truly a propitiatory sacrifice. The use made of its blood is proof sufficient of that. The lamb died in room of the first-born. Sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels, its blood sheltered the inmates of the dwelling from the stroke of the destroyer (vers. 21—24). "A sinless victim, the household might, as it were, hide behind it, and escape the just punishment of their sins" (Köhler in Geikie). The Passover thus emphatically taught the necessity of atonement for the covering of guilt. No thoughtful Israelite but must have deeply realised the truth, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). (3) *The solidarity of the nation.* The observance of the Passover was to be an act, not of individuals, but of households and groups of households, and in a wider sense, of the nation as a whole. The Israelites were thus taught to feel their unity as before God—their oneness in guilt as in redemption. (a) In guilt. Each was involved in guilt and doom, not only through his own sins, but through the sins of the nation of which he formed a part (cf. Is. vi. 5; Matt. xxiii. 35). (b) In redemption. This was beautifully symbolised in the eating of the lamb. The lamb was to be roasted entire, and placed on the table undivided (ver. 9). "By avoiding the breaking of the bones (ver. 46), the animal was preserved in complete integrity, undisturbed and entire (Ps. xxxiv. 20) . . . There was no other reason for this than that all who took part in this one animal, i.e. all who ate of it, should look upon themselves as one whole, one community, like those who eat the New Testament Passover, the body of Christ (1 Cor. v. 7), of whom the apostle says (1 Cor. x. 17), 'We being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.'" (Bähr.) (4) *It pointed to an atonement in the future.* For, manifestly, there lay in the blood of the lamb no real virtue to take away sin. It declared the necessity of atonement, but could not adequately provide it. The life of a beast was no proper substitute for the life of a first-born son. The Passover, therefore, from its very nature, is to be viewed as a type. It pointed on to Christ, in whom all the types of sacrifices find complete fulfilment. (5) *The various features of the ritual were symbolic.* The unleavened bread was indicative of haste (Deut. xvi. 3); the bitter herbs of the affliction of Egypt, etc. These circumstances, like the blamelessness of the victim, the sprinkling of the blood, etc., had also spiritual significance. See below, Homily on vers. 21—29. It is to be remarked, in general, that "the earthly relations then existing, and the operations of God in connection with them, were framed on purpose to represent and foreshadow corresponding but immensely superior ones, connected with the work and kingdom of Christ." (Fairbairn.)

II. THE PASSOVER AS AN ORDINANCE FOR LATER GENERATIONS (vers. 14, 24—28). In this respect, the Passover is to be viewed—1. *As an historical witness to the reality of the events of the exodus.* See below; also Homily on Deut. xvi. 1—9. The Passover, like the Lord's Supper, was an institution which, in the nature of things, could not have been set up later than the event professedly commemorated. 2. *As a perpetuation of the original sacrifice.* The blood of the lambs was year by year presented to God. This marked that the true sacrifice had not yet been offered (Heb. x. 1—3). Now that Christ has died, and has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26; x. 12), there is no room for further sacrifice, and the Lord's Supper is to be regarded as simply a commemorative ordinance and means of grace. The doctrine of the mass has no foundation in true scriptural analogy. 3. *As a means of grace.* It was a feast, collecting the Israelites in great numbers at the sanctuary, and reviving in their minds the memory of the great deliverance, in which had been laid the foundation of their national existence. The lamb, slain on their behalf, roasted with fire, and set on the

table before their eyes, to be handled and eaten by them, in solemn observance of a Divine command, gave them a vivid sense of the reality of the facts they were commemorating. The Lord's Supper, in like manner, is a powerful means of impressing mind and heart, an act of communion on the part of Christian believers, and a true source of nourishment (through spiritual participation in Christ) to the soul. 4. The observance of the Passover *was connected with oral instruction* (vers. 26, 27). This was a further guarantee for the handing down of a faithful, ungarbled tradition of the meaning of the ceremony; added to the interest of the service; took advantage of a favourable opportunity to impress the minds of the young; and helped to keep alive in all classes of the community a vivid remembrance of God's mighty works.

III. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (vers. 14—21). The ordinance for this feast was probably given at Succoth, on the day succeeding the exodus (see ver. 17, and ch. xiii. 5—8). It is inserted here on account of its internal connection with the Passover. It is to be viewed—1. *As a memorial of the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt.* The Israelites had evidently intended to leaven their dough on the night of the exodus, but were prevented by the haste (ver. 34). "For thou camest out of the land in haste" (Deut. xvi. 3). This is the historical groundwork of the institution. 2. *As a symbol of spiritual truth.* (1) The feast lasted seven days, a complete circle of time. (2) It was rounded off at the beginning and end by an holy convocation. This marked it as a *sacred* period. (3) Sacrifices were offered during its course (Num. xiii. 16—26; Deut. xv. 2). (4) The bread eaten was to be unleavened. So strict was the injunction on this point that the Israelite found eating leaven during these seven days was to be "cut off," i.e., excommunicated. The general idea of the feast was, therefore, to represent what redeemed life in its entirety ought to be—a life purged from the leaven of "malice and wickedness," and devoted to God's service in "sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 8). "The exodus formed the groundwork of the feast, because it was by this that Israel had been introduced into a new vital element" (Keil). The "walk in newness of life" follows on redemption. We may apply the precept about "cutting off from Israel" to the exclusion of immoral and impure members from the Church.—J. O.

Vers. 1—28.—*The institution of the Passover.* Moses has now done with requesting and threatening Pharaoh. He leaves Pharaoh to the terrible smiting hand of Jehovah, and turns, when it is quite time to turn, to his own people. He who would not listen had to be left for those who would listen. It is now manifest that Moses is to be profitably occupied with matters which cannot any longer be delayed. It was needful to give warning concerning the death of the first-born to the Israelites quite as much as to Pharaoh. For some time they had been the passive, the scarcely conscious objects of Divine mercy and power. Painfully conscious they were of the physical hardships which Pharaoh inflicted on them, but they had little or no thought of deprivations and hindrances with respect to higher things. God had been leading them forward by a way they knew not, and now the hour has come for them to know the way and walk in it with understanding, choice, circumspection, and diligence. All at once, from being passive spectators in the background, they came forward to be prime actors in the very front; and God is here telling them through Moses what to do, and how they are to do it. More is to be done than simply wait for God's coming at midnight: that coming has to be made ready for with great solemnity and minuteness of preparation.

I. NOTICE HOW JEHOVAH HERE BRINGS THE VOLUNTARY ELEMENT INTO THE DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH HIM. *They are to be delivered, only as they are willing to be delivered.* They are to signify their willing regard to conform with the will of God. The matter is made almost a personal one; if not brought before every Israelite, it is brought before every head of a household. Hitherto the immunities of the people during the course of the plagues had been secured in a mere external way. The protection belonged to a certain territory, and the Israelites had to exert no attention, take no trouble, in order to secure the protection. God kept the flies, the hail, and the darkness out of Goshen without requiring any mark upon the habitations and property of His people. But now, as the last visitation from God draws nigh, they have to take a part, and a very decided part, in making their exemption effectual. Jehovah comes, treating all who are in Egypt as belonging

fully to Egypt, and it is for the Israelites to show by some significant act the deep difference which separates between them and the Egyptians. There had been, up to this time, certain differences between the Egyptian and the Israelite which did not depend upon the Israelite's choice. The Egyptian was master, and the Israelite slave; assuredly the Israelite had not chosen that. An Egyptian might soon lose all trace of his personal ancestry, but every Israelite could trace his ancestry back to Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham; and this was a matter he had not chosen. The Egyptian belonged to a nation which had been smitten with nine plagues, but from the later and severer of these the Israelite dwelling in Goshen had been free; yet this freedom had been secured without making it to depend on the Israelite's own action. But now, as the day of redemption draws near, Jehovah reminds every Israelite that underneath all the differences which, in carrying out His purposes, He may make to exist among men, *there is a common humanity*. Before Him who comes smiting at midnight there is neither Israelite nor Egyptian, bond nor free; everything depends on the sprinkled blood; and the sprinkled blood depends on whether the Israelite has put it on his door *of his own accord*. If, that night, the Israelite did not of his own accord make a difference between himself and the Egyptian, then no natural distinction or past immunity was of the slightest avail. Even already it is being shown that circumcision availeth nothing, but a new creature. Israel can only be truly Israel as he is Israel inwardly. The mark upon the door without must come from the perfect heart and willing mind within. The only great abiding differences between man and man are such as we, fully considering our position, concur in making of our own free will. True it is that we cannot establish and complete these differences in our own strength; but it is very certain that God will not do this—indeed, by the very limitations of the thing to be done, he cannot—except as we willingly and with alacrity give him opportunity.

II. In these instructions for the Passover, GOD BRINGS THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT OF PURE FAITH INTO ACTIVE EXERCISE. In Heb. xi. 28 we are told that by faith Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them. And this faith extended from Moses to every head of a household in Israel. The whole instructions imply a trustful, disciplined spirit, on the part of those receiving them. Up to this time nothing had been required of them except to stand still and wait while God dealt with Pharaoh. They are left on one side, treated as helpless captives, whom it is vain to ask for what they cannot give. But now they are asked for something, and they have not only to render it willingly, but *with the obedience of faith* (Rom. xvi. 26). They are asked to slay a number of lambs, the number being determined according to a settled proportion. When the lambs are slain, the blood is to be sprinkled on the doors of each Israelite dwelling, and the flesh, prepared in a peculiar and exact way, is to be eaten by the inhabitants. *Well, what should all this have to do with the protection of Israel?* How should it advance the captives towards deliverance? If God had told them to get ready swords and spears, and discipline themselves for battle there would have been something intelligible in such instructions, something according to the schemes of human wisdom. But God does not deliver as men would deliver. It pleased him, in the fulness of time and by the foolishness of a slain lamb and sprinkled blood to save Israel. And yet it was not the slain lamb and sprinkled blood that saved by themselves. Moses and Aaron might have slain so many lambs and sprinkled their blood, and yet there would have been no efficacy in them. Their efficacy as protectors was not a natural efficacy. The efficacy lay in this: that the lambs were slain and the blood sprinkled *in the obedience of faith*. The thing done and the spirit in which it is done—truth and faith—go together in resistless power. *There must be truth*; faith by itself does nothing; for a man may believe a lie and then where is he? *There must be faith*; truth by itself does nothing; just as food does nothing unless a man takes it into his stomach. Of course it was quite possible for a sceptical Israelite to say, "What can there be in this sprinkled blood?"—and the very fact that such a question was possible shows how God was shutting his people up to pure faith. He asks them to *act simply on the word of Moses*. That word was now to be a sufficient reason for their conduct. Moses had done enough to show from whom he came. It is interesting to notice how faith stands here, asked for, the first thing, by Moses, even as it was afterwards by Jesus. As the Israelites believed because Moses spoke, so we must believe because Jesus speaks. *Jesus speaks*

truth because it is true; but we must receive it and believe it, not because in our natural reason we can see it as true, but because of the ascertained and well-accredited character of him who speaks it. And we must show our faith *by our works*, as these Israelites did. It was not required of them to understand how this sprinkled blood operated. They acted as believing that it would operate, and the indisputable fact is that they were saved. It is a great deal more important to have a thing done, than to be able to understand all the ins and outs by which it is done. A man does not refuse to wind up his watch, because he cannot understand its intricate mechanism. His purposes are served, if he understands enough to turn the key. And so our purposes are served, if we have enough practical faith in Jesus to gain actual salvation through him. Exactly how Jesus saves, is a question which we may ask again and again, and vainly ask. Let us not, in asking it, waste time and risk eternity, when by the prompt and full obedience of faith, we may know in our experience, that however obscure the process may be, the result itself is a real and abiding one.

III. Looking back on this passover lamb in the light of the finished work of Jesus, we see HOW AMPLÉ A TYPE IT IS OF HIM WHO WAS TO COME AFTER AND STAND BETWEEN THE BELIEVING SINNER AND THE AVENGING GOD. 1. *The lamb was taken so as to bind families and neighbours together.* This reminds us of Him, who gathers round himself, in every place, those who form the true family, the new family; joined together not after the temporary, dissolving order of *nature*, but after the abiding, ever-consolidating order of *grace*. Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, there the true Lamb of God is present in all those relations of which the passover lamb gave but a foreshadowing. The true families are made by the coalescence of those who, living in one neighbourhood, have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. 2. *The passover lamb was without blemish.* Consider what is said in this respect of Jesus (Matt. iii. 17; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22; xxiii. 4-14; John xix. 4-6; 2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. iv. 13; Col. i. 19; Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 22). 3. *It was a male of the first year.* So Jesus was taken in the freshness and strength of his manhood (Luke iii. 23). 4. *The flesh of the lamb was eaten in the company for which it had been slain.* It is only when we bear in mind the first passover in Egypt, that we reach the significance of all that was said and done on the night when Jesus sat down for the last passover feast with his disciples. Jesus took the bread and said: "Take, eat; this is my body." There was to be no more killing of the lamb; the bread, easily made and easily portioned out, took its place. But still the Lord had to say "this is my body." A body had to be thought of as eaten, and not mere bread. Really, when we look into the matter, we find that the sprinkling of the blood was only part of the protection; the eating was protective also. Assuredly the sprinkling by itself would have counted for nothing, if the eating had been omitted. When the blood was sprinkled, it illustrated faith in him who comes between God and the sinner. When the flesh was eaten, it illustrated faith in him whose life becomes our life. Being unblemished, he makes us unblemished, and being acceptable to God, he makes us acceptable also.

IV. We observe that even before the event to be commemorated was accomplished JEHOVAH MADE CAREFUL PROVISION FOR A MEMORIAL OBSERVANCE. Thus another indication is given to us, as to the completeness and order with which his plans were laid. Directions are given for the present need, and along with them are combined directions by which the record of this great liberating event may be transmitted to the remotest generations. Henceforth, the beginning of the year is to date from the month of these dealings with the first-born. Then there was also the appointment of the feast of unleavened bread. So crushing was the blow of Jehovah, and so precipitate the consequent action of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, that the Israelites were hurried out of the land with their dough before it was leavened. Here then in this domestic operation of preparing the daily bread was an opportunity given of setting forth once a year the complete separation which God had effected between the Israelites and the Egyptians. When for seven days no leaven was put in the bread, the great fact to be called up was this: that the Egyptians had hastened the Israelites out of the land. This memorial act called up at once the great change which God had produced, and in a comparatively short time. But a little while before and the Egyptians were spoiling the Israelites, demanding from them bricks without straw; now the Israelites are

spoiling the Egyptians, getting gold and silver and raiment from them in profusion, and with the utmost good-will.

V. ALL THE OTHER PREPARATIONS FOR JEHOVAH'S VISIT WERE TO BE CROWNED BY MAKING FULL PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE. Jehovah was coming to open the prison-doors and strike off the fetters; and he would have the captives ready to march on the instant. He is the God who makes all things to work together for good to them who are called according to his purpose. To him who is truly and devoutly obeying God, nothing comes but he is able to meet it. The obedient is never taken at a disadvantage; he is never defrauded of a great opportunity. The children of Israel were to eat the lamb in full readiness for the journey; even though it might plausibly be said that it was a making ready before the time. The lesson is, obey God in everything where as here the terms of his requirement are plain to the understanding and imperative to the conscience. Reasons are not for you, who know only in part, but for him to whom the darkness and the light are both alike.—Y.

I. THE DAY OF DELIVERANCE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN THE HISTORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE (vers. 1, 2). 1. It was then only that the history of the nation as the people of God began. Before they *had been told* of God's favour towards them; they now *knew* it. "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves" (John iv. 42). 2. God's final deliverance begins a new era for his people. "Behold I make all things new." 3. This has its correlative type in Christian experience now. The true life of the servant of God dates from the hour of his deliverance from the bondage of sin. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold all things are become new." Before Israel lay the experience of God's care and love, Sinai, the giving of the law, etc. Before us lies the deepening knowledge of his love, and of his will, the priestly service, etc.

II. THE COMMAND TO MAKE IT THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS. 1. The remembrance of God's grace makes the soul the dwelling-place of humbleness and trust. 2. It is joy and strength for service. 3. It is consecration; in the brightness of that unmerited grace the life is claimed for God; the ear is opened, the heart is touched and changed; we forget things that are behind, and reach forth to things that are before.—U.

Vers. 3-6.—*The Passover lamb a prophetic picture of Christ and his salvation.* I. FOR WHOM THE SACRIFICE AVAILS. 1. The families of Israel, the household of faith. There is no other bulwark against the visitation of the angel of death, and it shields these only. 2. Those who feed upon him. Saving faith must be a real, appropriating faith. Mere assent to a form of words avails nothing, neither can a mere intellectual conviction of the truth of Christianity or apprehension of the plan of salvation; it must be the soul's food.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE SACRIFICE. A lamb without blemish; gentleness and blamelessness. He who dies for us is accepted, *because* he is faultless. The sin-bearer must be sinless. This is redemption's great central mystery. But though the eternal reason of it may not be understood, the wisdom of it is shown in our experience. The power which changes us lies in this, that Christ died not for sins of his own, but solely for ours. "He bore *our* sins, in his own body on the tree."

III. HIS STORY. 1. The lamb kept for four days within the house foretold that God's accepted sacrifice should come forth from the homes of Israel. The *four days* may symbolise the nearly four years of our Lord's ministry. 2. The day and hour of the Saviour's death (ver. 6). 3. His death was to be Israel's act; "the whole assembly" were to slay it. (1) Our sins nailed him to the tree. *He was slain* by our iniquities. (2) Israel's act in the murder of the holy and just one was the expression of the sin which is in us all. None are free from this awful blood guiltiness, save the repentant and pardoned.—U.

Vers. 7-13.—*Christ his people's salvation and strength.* I. THE MEANS OF SAFETY (vers. 7-13). 1. They took the blood and struck it on the door posts and the lintel. We must appropriate Christ's atonement. We must say by faith, "he died for *me*." 2. They passed within the blood-stained portals. Christ's blood must stand between us and condemnation, between us and sin. Our safety lies in setting that between our soul and them. The realising of Christ's death *for our sins* is salvation.

II. THE MEANS OF STRENGTH FOR THE ONWARD WAY. Feeding upon Christ. While Egypt was slumbering Israel was feasting. While the world is busy with its dreams we must feast upon the joy of eternity, and, comprehending with all saints the infinite love of Christ, be filled with all the fulness of God. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

III. HOW CHRIST MUST BE PARTAKEN OF. 1. With unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The old leaven of malice and wickedness must be put away, and the feasting on Christ's love must be accompanied with repentance and self denial. There may be now and again a momentary glimpse of Christ's love where sin is not parted with, but there can be *no communion*, no enduring vision. 2. Christ must be taken as God has set him before us, in the simplicity of the Gospel, with nothing of man's invention, addition, or diminution. The Gospel remedy avails only when taken in the Gospel way (vers. 9, 10). 3. He must be partaken of in the union of love. The Passover is a social, a family feast. Those who refuse to seek church-fellowship are despising God's arrangements for their own salvation, and proving themselves devoid of the spirit which, loving him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. 4. He must be partaken of with the pilgrim spirit and preparedness (ver. 11). They who will be saved by Jesus must take up their cross and follow him.—U.

Vers. 14—20.—The Passover feast the type of the Christian life. **I. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE IS AN UNCEASING FESTIVAL.** 1. It is unending, deepening joy. Other joys fade, this brightens. 2. It is a growing appropriation of the Lamb of God. Our union with him grows ever closer, fuller. Is this our experience? A nominal Christianity will never save us. Are we feeding on Jesus? Are we in him and he in us?

II. IT IS THE KEEPING IN REMEMBRANCE OF A PAST DELIVERANCE, AND THE ANTICIPATION OF A GREATER. 1. There was present safety from the destroyer. 2. On the morrow there was to be the passing out from amidst the broken bonds of Egypt to the promised inheritance. The feast pointed backward, the types onward. We have forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, and the expectation of his coming the second time without sin unto salvation. Faith, and love, and hope the threefold glory of Christ's people.

III. IT IS A LIFE OF HOLINESS. From the beginning to the end of the feast the old leaven was not to be found in the dwellings of Israel. The soul that turns back to sin is cut off (vers. 15, 18—20). What was a mere accompaniment in the type, is a fruit of life in Christ.

IV. IT IS A FELLOWSHIP OF ALL BELIEVERS. It was not only a family feast. It began and it closed with an assembly of the whole congregation. There are separate churches still, as there were families then. But the union of all believers must be recognised and rejoiced in.—U.

Vers. 1—28; 43—51.—The Passover. "It is the Lord's Passover" (Ex. xii. 11). After Pharaoh's refusal to see Moses again, Jehovah comes more manifestly into the history, in the last judgment and deliverance of his people. Three great events crowd now into a single night the Passover, the slaying of the first-born, the march out. Consider now the Passover.

I. ITS NECESSITY. 1. Israel must be separated from Egypt. This idea of separation runs through all Hebrew history from the time of Abraham to this hour. But to a large extent Israel had now become merged into the Egyptian race, catching the plagues of its idolatry and sins. Great separating acts necessary—e. g., as in some of the earlier visitations, in the tenth, in the passover, in the exodus, in the Red Sea. 2. To this end Israel must be atoned afresh with God. The tenth plague was a miracle of pure judgment: for Israel to escape the penalty of its sin, an atonement necessary. That atonement was the passover.

II. ITS DESIGNATIONS. They were these: "A pass-over unto Jehovah:" "a sacrificial-slaying of pass-over unto Jehovah:" "The sacrifice of the first of the pass-over," xii. 11, 27; xxxiv. 25. Here we have four distinctive ideas. 1. The *Objective* of the pass-over was God. "Unto Jehovah." Like prayer intended to benefit man, but its objective God. Herein lies the distinction between Scriptural and unscriptural deas of atonement. 2. The pass-over was a *Sacrifice*. [For the argument, see

Kartt, vol. ii. 297, 298, Eng. ed.] 3. The result was a *Passing-over*. The stained lintel a bridge over which Jehovah was to pass in dread judicial progress through the land. 4. And a more remote result, the ushering in of a *Festal Life* for Israel. The festival of the passover foreshadowed the coming life of liberty.

III. THE LAMB. After expository development of the leading incidents, the following truths will emerge in relation to the antitype. 1. *The objective of the death of Christ is God*. The Socinian formula runs: "The death of Christ was not to reconcile God to man, but man to God." The scriptural doctrine is that the atonement does both: but reconciles man to God, by first atoning God with man. 2. Christ is "*without blemish and without spot*." 3. The atoning Christ was *deliberately selected, and fore-appointed*. 4. Kept in *view of the world*, that His worth, beauty and destiny might suitably affect men; as the lamb went in and out, for four days, the homes of Israel. 5. *Slain*. 6. The death was *Sacrificial*. 7. The result a *Passing-over* of judicial wrath. 8. But the sacrifice must be *appropriated*. The blood on the posts of the door a sign of the appropriating faith of the people. Here may be brought out the idea, that the door was the only possible altar at that moment of history. The idea of sacrifice had come down from patriarchal times; but there was no law of sacrifice, for as yet there was no nation to which to give it, and therefore there was no temple, and so no altar. Every family must be atoned for apart; every house was then a temple, and every door an altar. 9. Then, faith in Christ's atonement begins for us *high Festival*.

IV. THE MEAL. Show that the meal was much more than a mere supper to prepare for a journey. It had in it spiritual significance, in relation to the Christ. 1. *The Atoning Christ is the Food of the Soul* (John vi. 51). This for the very simple reason, that the truth of the atonement is central, supreme, and comprehensive. 2. An *uncorrupted* Christ. The lamb was roasted, i.e., was pure flesh acted on by fire; not sodden, diluted with water, or any way corrupted. 3. *A perfect* Christ, no bone broken. So on the cross a Christ divided is not sufficient for the nourishment of the soul, e.g., Christ as an "elect spirit of the race;" or as one in whom the "God-consciousness" received high development; or as example; Teacher, etc. Christ in his whole nature, character and office. 4. The enjoyment of Christ and of his salvation will depend on the *memory of the slavery of sin*. "Bitter herbs." 5. The Christian life is to be characterised by *simplicity and sincerity*. Note that unleavened bread is simply pure meal, all water parched out by the action of fire. For the significance see the Christian Rabbi, Paul, 1 Cor. i. 6-8. 6. The end of soul nutriment is *the Pilgrim-Life*. Each with staff in hand that night. 7. To the banquet, to the Exodus, to the Pilgrim-Life, *all are welcome*, on conditions, xii. 43-45. In that case, first circumcision; then coming under the sprinkled blood, were needful. The analogy is clear. Note! at the moment, when the distinction between Israel and Egypt was most marked, then did the catholicity of true Judaism most appear. In Abraham all mankind was to be blessed.—R.

Vers. 3—11. *If one died for all then all died*. Pharaoh's heart still hardened. The crowning judgment needs no intermediary; Jehovah will reveal His own right arm. Ex. xi. 4. "Who shall live when God doeth this?" He who obeying His word shelters himself beneath His shadow. See:—

I. THE PREPARATION. 1. *A carefully selected victim*. Ver. 5, deliberately set apart four days beforehand. Pure *within*; innocence typified by inexperience, "the first year." Pure without, "no blemish." 2. *A carefully conducted purification*. The partaker of the sacrificial feast must endeavour after a purity resembling that of the victim. Leaven, evil, must be purged out that he may offer and receive worthily.

II. THE PASSOVER. *A sacrifice to save from death*, v. 6, 7. Notice (1) Obedience ensured safety. The judgment was to go forth against the first-born; but the lamb slain—his blood duly sprinkled—would be accepted as a substitute. Obedience all that was demanded. (2) The meaning of the command. Few types are arbitrary; almost always some ground of relation between them and the thing typified, even though we may not see it. Here the pure lamb represents the offerer *as he ought to be*; it says in his name "I would be pure; I would dedicate myself wholly to thy service; accept me, not for what I am but for what Thou canst make me. Take this lamb for me; make me as this lamb!" Obedience saves, but that which is commanded shadows forth

the final result to be achieved by obedience. 2. *Sustenance to nerve for duty.* Lamb not merely to be killed but eaten. The people saved from the destroyer are to be released also from the oppressor; to commence at once the life of liberty. Strength needed for the march. That which saves is that which supports. If the lamb represents the offerer as he *ought to be*, feeding upon the lamb will represent feeding by faith upon the ideal thus figured. To become righteous we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, Matt. v. 6. Dedication is the starting-point, but the road is persistent obedience, and they only can walk that road who feed upon the ideal first set before them (Phil. iii. 12—14).

III. CHRIST OUR PASSOVER. The type leads naturally to the great antitype. 1. *Our sacrifice.* (1) Pure, perfect. Slain for us. By faith accepting his work, peace with God; shelter from the avenging angel. This is what we mean by *substitution*—Christ died for me. Notice however:—(2) Accepting this sacrifice we must still regard it as representative. Pleading its efficacy, we not merely mean "Forgive me for Christ's sake," but also, "I would be like Christ, I would give myself up wholly to Thy will even as he has done—Accept me in him, make me like him!" The doctrine of *substitution* is only explained by this underlying doctrine of *identity*, it could not otherwise be a doctrine of salvation. 2. *Our sustenance.* We too, saved in Christ, have to march on along the road which leads from slavery to freedom. To do this we must feed upon our ideal, "inwardly digest" it. What we ought to be; what we hope to be; what Christ is. Our great advantage over the Jew is that *our* ideal is realised in a person. To feed upon it is to feed upon Christ. To attain it is to be like Christ, to be one with him.

Application. Christ died for us. True, but Christ dying for us implies that we also die with him. Dedication of a substitute not enough unless self is dedicated in the substitute. Very well wishing to be *happy*, and the hope of many is little more than this. God, however, means us to be *holy*, and there is no *easy* road to holiness. Accept the ideal, accept Christ out and out, we shall find him more than an ideal: he will strengthen and sustain us till we attain it. Forget what the ideal is; forget what dedication means; we may yet find that it is possible for those who are saved from bondage to perish in the wilderness.—G

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 21—23.—THE FIRST PASSOVER. Having received the Divine directions as to the new rite, if not with all the fulness ultimately given them, yet with sufficient fulness for the immediate purpose, Moses proceeded to communicate the Divine Will to the people under his protection. Having already aroused the jealousy and hatred of Pharaoh, he could not summon a general assembly of the people, but he ventured to call a meeting of the elders, or heads of principal families, and through them communicated the orders which he had received to the entire nation. We find, in the directions which he gave, two small points which are not comprised in the record of God's words to him. 1. The designation of the "hyssop," as the instrument by which the blood was to be placed on the side-posts and lintel (ver. 22); and, 2. The injunction not to quit the house "until the morning." These points may have been contained in the original directions, though omitted from the record for

brevity; or they may have been added by Moses of his own authority. On the other hand, several very main points of the original directions are not repeated in the injunctions given to the elders, though there can be no doubt that they were communicated.

Ver. 21.—Draw out—i.e., "Withdraw from the flock." (See ver. 3.) A lamb. The word used is generic, and would not exclude the offering of a goat.

Ver. 22.—A bunch of hyssop. The hyssop was regarded as having purging or purifying qualities, and was used in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. xiv. 4), and of the leprous house (*ibid.* 51—52), and also formed an element in the "water of separation" (Num. xix. 6). It was a species of plant which grew on walls, and was generally low and insignificant (1 Kings iv. 33), yet which could furnish a stick or stalk of some length (John xix. 29). It must also have been a common plant in Egypt, the wilderness, and Palestine. Two suggestions are made with respect to it. One, that it was a species of marjoram (*Origanum*

Egyptiacum, or *O. Syriacum*) common in both Egypt and Syria; the other that it was the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*), which abounds especially in the Desert. (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 21.) It is in favour of this latter identification, that the modern Arabic name for the caper plant is *asaf* or *asuf*, which excellently represents the Hebrew *ezob*, the word uniformly rendered in our version by "hyssop." The blood that is in the basin. The Septuagint and Vulgate render—"that is on the threshold." *Saph*—the word translated "basin" has the double meaning. None of you shall go out. Moses may well have given this advice on his own authority, without any Divine command. (See introductory paragraph.) He would feel that beyond the protection of the blood of the lamb, there was no assurance of safety.

Ver. 23.—Compare verses 12, 13 which are closely followed. The only important difference is, the new expression, "The Lord will not suffer the destroyer to come in," which has generally been regarded as implying, that the actual agent in the killing of the first-born was a "destroying angel." But it is to be noted that elsewhere Jehovah himself is everywhere spoken of as the sole agent; and that in the present passage the word used has the meaning of "destruction" no less than that of "destroyer." Bishop Lowth's idea of an opposition between God and the destroying angel (*Comment on Isaiah xxxi. 5*) is scarcely tenable.

Ver. 24.—To thee and to thy children.

The change from the plural to the singular is curious. Perhaps, we are to understand that Moses insisted on the perpetuity of the ordinance to each of the elders severally.

Ver. 25.—The land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised. See above, ch. iii. 8—17; vi. 4; and compare Gen. xvii. 8; xxviii. 4, etc.

Ver. 26.—When your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service. Apparently, Moses adds these injunctions by his own sole authority. He assumes that curiosity will be aroused by the strange and peculiar features of the Paschal ceremony, and that each generation in succession will wish to know its meaning and origin.

Ver. 27.—It is the sacrifice. It has been denied that the Paschal lamb was, in the true sense of the word, a sacrifice (Carpzov and others). But this passage alone is decisive on the question, and proves that it was. Moreover, it was offered in the holy place (Deut. xvi. 5, 6); the blood of it was sprinkled upon the altar, and the fat was burnt (2 Chr. xxx. 16; xxxv. 11). Compare also Ex. xxiii. 18; Num. ix. 7; Deut. xvi. 2. The people bowed the head and worshipped. Rather, "and made obeisance." Compare ch. iv. 31. By "the people" seems to be meant "the elders of the people." (See ver. 21.)

Ver. 28.—So did they. The long series of miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron had so impressed the people, that they yielded an undoubting and ready obedience.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 22.—*No safety for man beyond the limits protected by the Lamb's atoning blood.* No Israelite was to pass beyond the door of his house until the morning, lest he should be destroyed by the destroyer. Within the precincts, protected by the blood of the lamb, he was safe. Let Christians beware of stepping beyond the limits whereto the atoning blood extends. Those step beyond the limits—

I. WHO TEMPT GOD BY DALYING WITH SIN. Atonement has been made for us, we feel. We have had moments of assurance that atonement and forgiveness are ours. We have had an impression that we were safe. At once the Evil One begins to whisper to our hearts that there is no longer any need of our walking warily, of our being afraid to put ourselves in temptation's way, of our flying all contact with evil; and we are too apt to listen to his suggestions, to regard the danger of falling from grace as past, and to allow ourselves a liberty in which there is too often awful peril. We draw near the confines of sin, confident that we shall sin no more; and lo! we are entangled in the meshes. And why? *Because we have gone beyond the limits protected by the atoning blood.* We have opened the door and stepped out. We have turned our backs upon the redeeming marks and put them behind us. We have been over-trustful in our own strength.

II. WHO ARE PUFFED UP BY THE THOUGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS AND PRIVILEGES. "Pride goeth before a fall." Pride was the great temptation of the Jew, who felt himself one of God's peculiar people, to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4). And pride often tempts the Christian, who has realised the work of Christ on his behalf, and the greatness of the salvation wrought for him. But

pride is one of the deadly sins, and at once severs the soul from Christ. The blood of the covenant does not extend its protection over the paths which are trodden by the foot of pride. He who enters on them has wandered beyond the door which bears the redemption-marks, and is open to the assaults of the destroyer.

III. WHO FOLD THEIR HANDS AND CEASE TO BE ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS, AS THOUGH THEY HAD ALREADY ATTAINED. Though we cannot, by anything that we can do, merit our own salvation, or redeem ourselves or others (Ps. xlix. 7), yet God will have us "work while it is day," and the atoning blood of Christ atones for those only who are "careful to maintain good works" (1st. iii. 8). Idleness, apathy, sloth, are contrary to his will and his word; and the man who indulges in them has strayed beyond the prescribed limits and lost the needful protection. Well for him if he discovers his mistake in time to return, and "do again the first works" (Rev. ii. 5), and so regain the lost shelter! It is needless to say that the atoning blood can avail none who (1) reject the atonement; or, (2) despise it, by giving it no thought; or, (3) trample it under foot by leading an immoral and ungodly life. These are as far removed from its protection as were the Egyptians.

Vers. 26, 27.—*The obligation of men to teach the true meaning of rites and ceremonies to their children.* The rites and ceremonies of a religion are liable to be misunderstood in two ways. 1. They may be regarded as unimportant, trifling, nay, even as superstitious—a weight and an encumbrance on true vital religion. Or, 2. They may be assigned more importance than is their due; considered to be that in which religion mainly consists, believed to have an inherent power and efficacy which is far from belonging to them. Men are prone to extremes; and most persons are naturally inclined either unduly to exalt, or unduly to depreciate religious ceremonies. Of the two evils, undue depreciation would seem to be the worse, for the following reason:—

I. UNDUE DEPRECIATION OF CEREMONIES (*a*) tends to make them of little service to men when they actually take part in them, since they neither prepare themselves properly beforehand, so as to derive from them the benefit they might, nor enter into them with much heart at the time of their occurrence, nor help their effect by devout meditation upon them afterwards. (*b*) It causes an infrequent participation in the ceremonies by the depreciators, who, expecting but little benefit in the future, and being conscious of but little benefit in the past, allow small obstacles to prevent their attendance at services which they do not value. (*c*) In extreme cases, it produces either complete abstention from, or sometimes actual abrogation of the rite, whereby advantages are forfeited on the part of whole sections of believers which would otherwise have been enjoyed by them. Thus the Society of Friends loses the benefit of both sacraments, with sad results to the spiritual life of numbers.

II. UNDUE EXALTATION OF CEREMONIES has the advantage of at any rate retaining them in use, so that their benefit is not wholly lost. It often, however, greatly lessens the benefit (*a*) by exaggerated and superstitious views of its nature, and (*b*) by the attribution of the benefit to the mere formal participation in the rite irrespective of the participator's preparation, attention, and devoutness at the time. Further, it is apt to produce such a reliance on the ceremonies as is unfavourable to practical efforts at improving the moral character and making advances towards Christian perfection. Careful instruction in the true nature and value of ceremonial observances is thus of the highest importance; and parents should perhaps scarcely wait till their children "ask the meaning" of public worship, baptism, confirmation, the Lord's supper, etc., before enlightening them on the true nature and value of each. In so doing, it will always be of use to set forth the historical origin of each usage, to show when and how it arose, and to draw attention to what Scripture says on the subject. Men's private views are various, and may be mistaken, but the Scriptures cannot but be true; and a knowledge of what is contained in the Bible with respect to each Christian rite or ceremony will be an excellent basis for the formation of a sound and healthy opinion on the subject when, in the course of time, the different views of different sections of believers come to be known.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 21—29.—“*Christ our Passover.*” The Passover was an eminent type of Christ. It was probably to it the Baptist referred when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29). Paul gives a decisive utterance on the question in the words: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. v. 7).

I. POINTS OF ANALOGY BETWEEN THE TRUE PASSOVER AND ITS TYPE. 1. In both *the death of a blameless victim*. The lamb, physically blameless (ver. 5); Christ, morally faultless. A sinful world needs a sinless Saviour. It has one in Christ. The sinlessness of Christ, a moral miracle. Proofs of this sinlessness. (1) Christ asserts his own freedom from sin (John viii. 29—46; xiv. 30). (2) In no part of his conduct does he betray the least consciousness of guilt. Yet it is admitted that Jesus possessed the finest moral insight of any man who has ever lived. (3) His apostles, one and all, believed him to be sinless (2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 John iii. 5). (4) His enemies could find no fault in him (Matt. xxvi. 60; xxvii. 23, 24). (5) The very traitor confessed the innocence of Christ (Matt. xxvii. 4). (6) The delineation of his character in the gospels bears out the averment of his moral blamelessness. (7) The captious efforts which have been made, by fixing on a few paltry points in the gospel narratives to impeach Christ’s sinlessness, indirectly prove it. “As if sin could ever need to be made out against a real sinner in this small way of special pleading; or as if it were ever the way of sin to err in single particles, or homœopathic quantities of wrong” (Bushnell). 2. In both, *the design is to secure redemption from a dreadful evil*. In the one case, from the wrath of God revealed against Egypt in the smiting of its first-born. In the other, from the yet more terrible wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. i. 18). “Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. i. 10). “Saved from wrath through him” (Rom. v. 9). 3. In both, *the principle of the deliverance is that of vicarious sacrifice*. The lamb was substituted for the first-born. It protected the house, on whose door-posts the blood was sprinkled, from the stroke of the avenger. The substitutionary character of the death of Christ is, in like manner, affirmed in innumerable Scriptures. Jesus “died for the ungodly” (Rom. v. 6). He “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1 Pet. iii. 18). He gave “his life a ransom for many” (Matt. xix. 28). His blood is a propitiation (Rom. iii. 25). There is just ground for the remark of Coleridge (we quote from memory) that a man who would deal with the language of his father’s will, as Unitarians on this and other points do with the language of the New Testament, would be liable to an action at law. 4. In both, *there was need for an act of personal, appropriating faith*. “The people bowed the head, and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded” (vers. 27, 28). “Through faith (they) kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood,” etc. (Heb. xi. 28). Their faith showed itself in sprinkling the blood on their door-posts and lintels, and in sheltering themselves under it. Nothing short of this would have availed to save them. So it is not knowledge about Christ, but faith in him; personal application to his blood, and trust in it as the means of salvation, which secures our safety. Faith is the bunch of hyssop. 5. In both, *the slain lamb becomes the food of the new life*. There was, on the part of the Israelites, a sacrificial feast upon the flesh of the lamb. This denoted, indeed, peace and fellowship with God, but it was also an act of nourishment. Similarly, under the Gospel, the new life is nourished by feeding upon Christ. We make him ours by inward appropriation and assimilation, and so are spiritually nourished for all holy service (cf. John vi.). Minor typical features might be insisted upon (male of the first year, roast with fire, not a bone broken, unleavened bread, bitter herbs of contrition, etc.), but the above are the broad and outstanding ones.

II. THE SURPASSING EXCELLENCE OF THE TRUE PASSOVER. It belongs to the nature of a type that it should be surpassed by the antitype. The type is taken from a lower sphere than the thing which it represents. So completely, in the case of the passover, does the reality rise above the type, that when we begin to reflect on it the sense of likeness is all but swallowed up in the sense of disproportion. How great, I. The contrast in the *redemptions*. The redemption from Egypt, though spiritual elements were involved in it, was primarily a redemption from the power of Pharaoh, and from a

temporal judgment about to fall on Egypt. Underlying it, there was the need for a yet greater redemption—a redemption from the curse of a broken law, and from the tyranny of sin and Satan; from death spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It is this higher redemption which Christ has achieved, altering, through his death, the whole relation of God to man, and of (believing) man to God. 2. The contrast in the *victims*. That, an irrational lamb; this, the Eternal Son of God in human nature, the Lord's own Christ. 3. The contrast in the *efficacy of the blood*. The blood of the passover lamb had no inherent virtue to take away sin. Whatever virtue it possessed arose from God's appointment, or from its typical relation to the sacrifice of Christ. Its imperfection as a sacrifice was seen (1) In the *multitude* of the victims. (2) In the *repetition* of the service (Heb. x. 1—3). But what the flowing of the blood of millions of lambs, year by year slain in atonement for sin could not achieve, Christ has achieved once for all by the offering up of his holy body and soul. The dignity of his person, the greatness of his love, his holy will, the spirit of perfect self-sacrifice in which he, himself sinless, offered himself up to bear the curse of sin for the unholy, confers upon his oblation an exhaustless meritoriousness. Its worth and sufficiency are infinite (Heb. x. 10—15; 1 Pet. i. 19; 1 John ii. 2). 4. The contrast in the *specific blessings obtained*. The difference in these springs from the contrast in the redemptions. Israel obtained (1) Escape from judgment. (2) Outward liberty. (3) Guidance, care, and instruction in the desert. (4) Ultimately, an earthly inheritance. We receive, through Christ, (1) Pardon of all sins. (2) A complete justifying righteousness, carrying with it the title to eternal life. (3) Renewal and sanctification by the Spirit. (4) Every needed temporal and spiritual blessing in life. (5) Heaven at the close, with triumph over death, the hope of a resurrection, and of final perfecting in glory.—J. O.

Ver. 26, 27.—“*What mean ye by this service?*” Apply to the Lord's Supper.

I. A QUESTION TO BE PUT BY THE COMMUNICANT TO HIMSELF. Qualification for the Lord's table includes “knowledge to discern the Lord's body,” as well as “faith to feed upon him.”

II. A QUESTION LIKELY TO BE PUT TO THE COMMUNICANT BY HIS CHILDREN. 1. The children are presumed to be *spectators* of the ordinance. It is well that children should be present during the administration of the sacraments. It awakens their interest. It leads them to inquire. 2. The ordinance is *fitted* to attract attention. An external interest attaches to it. It appeals to the senses. The symbolic acts and movements prompt to inquiry. 3. It furnishes an excellent *opportunity* for imparting instruction. Children will attend to an explanation of the sacraments, who will pay little attention to a book or a sermon. The symbolism of the ordinance aids instruction; makes it vivid and impressive.

III. A QUESTION WHICH THE CHRISTIAN PARENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER TO HIS CHILDREN. It is a sad matter when a parent is incapable of sitting down, and instructing his children in the meaning of the sacramental symbol. It betrays something worse than ignorance; not improbably, a total want of spiritual religion.

IV. THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION INVOLVES A STATEMENT OF THE GREATEST VERITIES OF OUR FAITH. The Jew had to answer to his child—“It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover,” etc. (ver. 27). The Christian has to answer, “It is the memorial of our Lord's death, in atonement for our sins.” He has to tell—1. How we were in guilt and danger. 2. How, for the love wherewith he loved us, Christ gave himself up to the death for our redemption. 3. How, for his sake, we are forgiven and accepted. 4. How the ungodly world has still God's wrath resting upon it. It is wonderful to reflect how simply, yet how perfectly, God has provided for the handing down of a testimony to these great truths in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The pulpit may fail to preach the doctrine of atonement; Rationalistic and Unitarian teachers may deny it; but as often as the Lord's Supper is observed, on the model of the New Testament, the truth is anew proclaimed in unmistakable symbols. To give a child a satisfactory explanation of the Lord's Supper, embodying the words of institution, would be almost of necessity, to preach a sermon on the atonement.—J. O.

Vers. 26—27.—*The children's question in Canaan*. 1. IT WAS A QUESTION TO BE EXPECTED. The service was one to provoke curiosity. It was not some daily action of

the household, of which the children learned the meaning and purpose almost unconsciously. The grinding of the corn, the kneading of the dough, in a very short time explained themselves. But when as the beginning of the year drew round, it brought with it these special observances, the slaying and eating of the lamb and the seven days of unleavened bread, there was everything to make a child ask, "What is this being done for?" God makes one thing to fit into another. He institutes services of such a kind, with such elements of novelty and impressiveness in them, that the children make it easier for them to be instructed in the things that belong to his will. And what was true concerning this passover service, is also true, more or less, concerning all that is revealed in the Scriptures. The great facts of Divine revelation are such as to provoke curiosity, even in a child's mind. If it be true that the Scriptures are given to guide us all the way through life, then what is more reasonable to expect than that God will have placed much in them to stir up attention and inquiry from those who are just at the beginning of life?

II. HENCE THIS WAS A QUESTION TO BE ENCOURAGED. Every advantage was to be taken of childish curiosity. Inquisitive children are often reckoned a nuisance, and told to be quiet; yet such a policy as this, though it may save trouble in the present, may lead to a great deal more trouble in the future. A stupid child who never asks questions, is to be reckoned an object of pity and a source of peril. God has always in mind how to make each generation better instructed than the one going before; more obedient to him, and more serviceable for his purposes. The temptation of the grown people in Israel was to undervalue what was going on in the minds of their children. Remember how Mary and Joseph suffered through their want of forethought on this point. The God who watches human beings all the way from the cradle to the grave knows well how children, even very little children, have their own thoughts about things; and he wanted the people to give them every encouragement and information. One question wisely answered leads to the asking of other questions. Thus, by the continuance of an inquiring mood in the mind, and thus only, is profitable information to be given. Information is not to be poured into the mind as into a bucket; it must be taken as food, with appetite, and digestive and assimilating power. Thus if the question were not asked, if, while the passover preparations were being made, a child stood by in stolid unconcern, or ran away heedlessly to play, such conduct would fill a wise parent with solicitude. He would look upon it as being even more serious than a failure of physical health. He would do all he could by timely suggestions to bring the question forth. Ingenuity and patience may do much to bring curiosity into action, and if the question were not asked it would have to be assumed. The narrative of the passover was a most important one for every Israelite child to hear and remember; and if only the narrative was begun, it might soon excite the requisite and much desired interest.

III. IT WAS A QUESTION WHICH GAVE GREAT SCOPE FOR USEFULNESS TO THE CHILDREN IN THE ANSWERING OF IT. God, indeed, directs how it is to be answered; but of course, it is not meant that there was to be a formal, parrot-like confinement to these words. What, for instance, could be more gratifying to the children, who in after times asked this question, than to begin by pointing out to them, how God himself expected them to ask this question? Then the words he had directed Moses to provide for an answer, might be repeated. But it would have been a poor spiritless answer, displeasing to God, and profitless to the children, if it had stopped with the bare utterance of the words in ver. 27. There was room for much to be said, that would very peculiarly impress the mind of a thoughtful child. It might be reminded that whereas, *now*, little children were born in the freedom of Canaan, some among their forefathers had been born in the bondage of Egypt. It might be told of that Pharaoh who had threatened the men-children with destruction. In particular, the story of the infant Moses might be told. So now, in those parts of the world where the idols are abolished, and former idolaters are gathered round the throne of grace for Christian worship, an opportunity is given for explaining to the children, in how much better a state, and with how much better surroundings they are brought up. "What mean ye by this service?" was a question which could be answered in form, and yet with such absence of heart, as utterly to chill and thwart the eager inquirer. Whereas, if it were only answered with evident care, with amplitude of detail, with loving desire to interest and satisfy, then the child thus favoured, would be laid under great obligations to be thankful in feeling, and devoted

in service. A question of this sort gave great opportunity. Happy those who could seize the opportunity at once, and use it to the full.

IV. IT WAS A QUESTION WHICH CAME TO CALL EVERY ISRAELITE, AT THE ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER, TO A CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF HIS OWN FEELINGS WITH RESPECT TO IT. It was a question which helped to guard against formality. A little child may render a great service, without knowing it, even to a grown man. God can send the little ones, to test, to rebuke, to warn, to stir out of lethargy. "What mean ye by this service?" How is the Israelite of the grown generation to answer this question? He may tell the child what the service is intended for, the historical facts out of which it arose, and the Divine appointments concerning it; but after all, this is no real answer to the question. It may be an answer to satisfy the inquiring child, and yet leave the person who has to give it, with a barbed arrow in his memory and conscience. Notice the precise terms of the question. *What mean ye* by this service? How should the child ask in any other terms? It looks and sees the parents doing something new and strange; and to them it naturally looks for explanation and guidance. The question is not simply, "Why is this thing being done?" but "Why are *you* doing it, and what do *you mean* by it?" It became only too possible in the lapse of ages, to go through this service in a cold, mechanical, utterly unprofitable way. Not so, we may be sure, was it observed the first time in Egypt, on the night of deliverance. Then all was excitement, novelty, and overflowing emotion. Be it ours, in considering all outward and visible acts in connection with religion, all symbolic and commemorative institutions, to ask ourselves in great closeness and candour of personal self-application, "What mean we by this service?" Do we mean anything at all, and if so, what is it that we mean? To answer this is not easy: it is not meant to be easy. Perhaps one great reason why there are such marked and unabated differences of opinion with respect to Baptism and the Lord's Supper is, that we have never sufficiently considered the question, "What mean ye by these services?" It is hard work to be quit of mere superstition, mere clinging to outward observances as matters of custom, tradition, and respectability. It is very certain that to this question of the children, put in all its particular emphasis, only too many fathers in Israel would have been forced to reply, "We do this thing because our fathers did it." Remember that forms are, in themselves, nothing to the invisible, spiritual God. Their value is as containing, protecting and expressing what we have to present. That which pleased Jehovah and profited Israel was not the outward passover service, but the intelligence, the perceptions, the gratitude, the aspirations, and the hopes that lay behind it.—Y.

Vers. 21—28.—*Israel and the sacrifice for sin.* I. CHRIST SLAIN BY US. The lamb's blood was not only shed for them, but also by them. The crucifying of Jesus by the Jews, the revelation of what lies in every unrenewed heart. "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced."

II. WHAT IS NEEDFUL FOR SALVATION. 1. Appropriating faith. It was the blood applied with their own hands to the door of the dwelling that saved those within. It is not enough that the blood be shed. Is it *upon our gates*? Have we set it by faith between us and destruction? 2. It must be applied as God directs us. It was sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts—not within, but without. It is not enough that we believe. We must make open profession of our faith. 3. We must abide within until the day dawn and salvation come. To put that blood (which should be between us and the world) behind us, no longer to hide within it but to forget it, is to renounce salvation. Are we without or within the blood-stained gateway? We are saved if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

III. GOD'S COVENANT GIVES PERFECT SECURITY (ver. 25). The shed blood stands between us and death. The awe and joy of redeemed Israel, a faint emblem of the awe and joy which we shall feel, who shall see the judgment of sin but only from afar.

IV. THE DUTY OF THE REDEEMED. 1. Perpetual remembrance (ver. 23). We must, in the ordinance of Christ's own appointment, shew his death till he come. 2. The handing down the knowledge of salvation (vers. 26, 27). Christians should glory in the story of the Cross.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 29, 30.—THE TENTH PLAGUE. At last the time had come for the dealing of the final blow. Nine plagues had been sent, nine inflections endured, and no serious effect had been produced. Once or twice Pharaoh had wavered, had made profession of submitting himself, had even acknowledged his sin. But each time he had relapsed into obstinacy. Now at length the fiat had gone forth for that last plague which had been announced the first (ch. iv. 23). Pharaoh's own son, his firstborn, the heir to his throne, was smitten with death, in common with all the other male Egyptians who had "opened the womb." What the effect on the king would have been, had he alone suffered, we cannot certainly say. As it was, the whole population of the country, nobles, tradesmen, peasants, suffered with him; and the feeling aroused was so intense that the popular movement left him no choice. The Egyptians everywhere "rose up in the night" (ver 30), and raised "a great cry," and insisted that the Israelites should depart at once (ver. 33). Each man feared for himself, and felt his life insecure, so long as a single Israelite remained in the land.

Ver. 29.—At midnight. As prophesied by Moses (ch. xi. 4). The day had not been fixed, and this uncertainty must have added to the horror of the situation. The first-born of Pharaoh. We have no proof that the eldest son of Menephtah died before his father, unless we take this passage as proving it. He left a son, called Seti-Menephtah, or Seti II., who either succeeded him, or reigned after a short interval, during which the throne

was held by Ammonmes, a usurper. The first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon. This phrase takes the place of another expression, viz. "the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill" (ch. xi 5). In both cases, the general meaning is, "all, from the highest to the lowest." This is perhaps the whole that is in the writer's thought; but it is also true that captives in dungeons were in some cases employed in turning hand-mills (Judg. xvi. 21). And all the first-born of cattle. Rather, "of beasts." There is no limitation of the plague to domesticated animals.

Ver. 30.—And Pharaoh rose up in the night, and all his servants. This general disturbance differentiates the present visitations from that which came upon the host of Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 35). Then, the calamity came with such silence and secrecy, that the deaths were not suspected until men rose to go about their various tasks in the morning. Now, every household seems to have been aroused from its sleep in the night. We must suppose sharp and painful illness, terminating after a few hours in death. The disaster itself may have been one from which Egypt often suffers in the spring of the year (Kalisch): but its attacking all the firstborn and no others, and no Israelites, as well as its announcement, plainly showed it to be miraculous. There was a great cry. See the comment on ch. xi. 6. For there was not a house where there was not one dead. This is perhaps a slight hyperbole. There would be many families in which there was no son; and some houses might contain no male who had opened the womb. It is always to be borne in mind, that the language of Scripture—especially where exciting and tragical events are narrated—is poetical, or at the least highly rhetorical.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 29, 30.—The death of the first-born. From the death of the first-born we may learn:—

I. THE SEVERITY OF GOD'S LONG DEFERRED JUDGMENTS. That punishment will overtake the wicked sooner or later was the conviction of heathendom no less than of the Jewish and Christian worlds. Horace says—"Judgment may halt, but yet it rarely fails to overtake the guilty one at last." Tibullus—"Wretch, though at first thy sin no judgment meet, vengeance will come at length with silent feet." But the greater heaviness of the punishment that is long deferred does not appear to have attracted their notice. Yet experience might have taught it them. Who has not seen the long triumphant career of a thoroughly bad man, crowned with success for years, seeming to turn all he touched to gold, "flourishing," as the Psalmist has it, "like a green bay tree," yet ending in calamities and misfortunes so striking, and so heaped one upon another, as to draw general attention? It is invidious, perhaps, to note instances; but the present generation has seen at least one example among the crowned heads of

Europe. And Scripture is full of examples. How long God's Spirit strove with men in the antediluvian world, as they proceeded from one wickedness to another, heaping up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, till the flood came and swept away the ungodly! For what a prolonged term of years must the long-suffering of God have borne with the cities of the plain, as they more and more corrupted themselves, till in all Sodom there were not ten godly men left! And then, how signal the punishment! Again, what an instance is Ahab of the operation of the law! Flourishing in every way, in spite of his numerous sins—his idolatries, cruelties, selfishness, meanness, hatred of God's servants—victorious over Benhadad, supported by all the forces of Jehoshaphat, encouraged by his successes to undertake an aggressive war against Syria—and then struck down in a moment, slain by an arrow shot at a venture (1 Kings xxii. 34)—his blood licked up by dogs—his wife and seventy sons murdered! The Pharaohs and the Egyptians had now worked their wicked will on Israel for a century or more, since the king arose "who knew not Joseph"—all this time they had been treasuring up to themselves wrath (Rom. ii. 5)—and now it had fallen upon them in full force. Let sinners beware of trying the forbearance and long-suffering of God too far—let them tremble when all goes well with them, and no punishment comes. Let them be assured that the account of their offences is strictly kept, and that for each they will have to suffer. Delay does but mean accumulation. However long suspended, the bolt will fall at last, and it will be proportioned in its severity to the length of the delay, and the amount of the wrath stored up.

II. THE SUDDENNESS WITH WHICH THEY COME UPON MEN. It was night—it was the hour of repose, of peace, silence, tranquillity. All had gone to rest unsuspectingly. No one anticipated evil. Each said to himself, as he lay down, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant," when suddenly, without warning, there was death everywhere. Fathers saw the light of their eyes snatched from them—mothers beheld their darlings struggling in the agonies of dissolution. A shrill, prolonged cry sounded throughout the land. So the flood came upon man unawares (Luke xvii. 27)—and a sudden destruction overthrew the cities of the plain (*ib.* 28, 29)—and Ahab found himself mortally wounded when he was thinking of nothing but victory—and in the height of his pride Herod Agrippa was seized with a fearful malady—and Uzziah's leprosy smote him in a moment—and in the night of his feast was Belshazzar slain. Wicked men are for the most part thinking of nothing less when the judgments of God fall upon them. They have said to their soul—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when the dread sentence goes forth—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." God's judgments often come in the night. We know not what a day, nor what a night may bring forth. Let us commend our souls to God when we lie down to rest, and repeat the prayer of the Litany against sudden death.

III. THE IMPARTIALITY WITH WHICH THEY ARE DEALT OUT UPON ALL CONDITIONS OF MEN. "Pale death smites equally the poor man's hut and the king's palace," says a heathen moralist. And so it is with all God's judgments. He is no respecter of persons. "Without respect of persons he judgeth according to every man's work" (1 Pet. i. 17). Greatness furnishes no security against him. His messengers can enter the palace, elude the sentinels, pass the locked doors, make their way into the secret chamber, smite the monarch, sleeping or waking, with disease, or death, or frenzy. Nor can obscurity escape him; "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The lowest dungeon, the most wretched garret, the obscurest cellars are within his ken, their inmates known, the moral condition of each and all of them noted. His judgments find men out as easily in the darkest haunts of vice, or the most wretched abodes of poverty, as in royal mansions. And as greatness will not prevent him from chastising, so neither will meanness. The "woman behind the mill," the "captive in the dungeon" are his creatures and his servants, no less than the great, and must be either his true servants, or rebels against his authority. If they are the latter, their obscurity and insignificance will not save them from his judgments, any more than the great man's greatness will save him. Vice must not look for impunity because it is low-placed, and hides itself in a corner.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 29—31.—*The death of the first-born.* On this see ch. xi. 4—7. Observe here—

I. THIS JUDGMENT IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF REPRESENTATION. Hitherto, the plagues had fallen on the Egyptians indiscriminately. Now, a change is made to the principle of representation. Egypt, Israel also, is represented in its first-born. When a death-penalty was to be inflicted, the lines had to be drawn more sharp and clear. We are reminded that *this principle of representation holds a vitally important place in God's moral government.* The illustrations which more immediately affect ourselves are, first, the representation of the race in Adam, and second, its representation in Christ (Rom. v. 12—21). Hence it is not altogether fanciful to trace a relation to Christ even in this judgment on the first-born. *1. Christ is the great first-born of the race.* We catch some glimpse of this by looking at the matter from the side of Israel. Israel, as God's son, his first-born, is admitted to have been a type of Christ (cf. Matt. ii. 15). Much more were the first-born in Israel—the special representatives of this peculiar feature in the calling of the nation—types of Christ. They resembled him in that they bore the guilt of the rest of the people. But Christ, as the Son of man, sustained a relation to more than Israel. He is, we may say, the great First-born of the race. Egypt as well as Israel was represented in him. *2. The death of Christ is not only God's great means of saving the world, but it is God's great judgment upon the sin of the world.* It is indeed the one, because it is the other. There is thus in the death of Christ, both the Israel side and the Egypt side. There is some shadow of vicarious endurance of penalty—of the one suffering for, and bearing the guilt of, the many—even in the destruction of Egypt's first-born. *3. The death of Christ, which brings salvation to the believing, is the earnest of final doom to the unbelieving portion of the race.* This also is exhibited in principle in the history of the exodus. In strictness, the first-born were viewed as having died, both in Israel and Egypt. The Egyptian first-born died in person; the Israelitish first-born in the substituted lamb. The death of a first-born in person could typify judgment in the room, or in the name, of others; but the first-born being himself one of the guilty, his death could not (even in type) properly redeem. Hence the substitution of the lamb, which held forth in prophecy the coming of the true and sinless first-born, whose death *would* redeem. But Christ's death, to the unbelieving part of mankind—the wilfully and obstinately unbelieving—is a prophecy, not of salvation, but of judgment. God's judgment on sin in the person of Christ, the first-born, is the earnest of the doom which will descend on all who refuse him as a Saviour. And this was the meaning of the death of the first-born in Egypt. That death did not redeem, but forewarned Egypt of yet worse doom in store for it if it continued in its sins. The first-born endured, passed under, God's judgment, for the sin of the nation; and so has Christ passed under, endured God's judgment, for the sin even of the unbelieving. Egypt, not less than Israel, was represented in him; but to the one (Egypt as representative of hostility to the kingdom of God) his death means doom; to the other (Israel as representative of the people of God) it means salvation.

II. THIS JUDGMENT COMPELLED PHARAOH TO RELAX HIS HOLD ON ISRAEL. It was the consummating blow. Imagination fails in the attempt to realise it. As we write, accounts come to hand of the terrific storm of Oct. 14 (1881), attended by a lamentable loss of life on the Berwickshire coast of Scotland. The storm was sudden, and preluded by an awful and ominous darkness. Cf. with remarks on ninth plague the following:—"I noticed a black-looking cloud over by the school, which shortly spread over all the sky out by the Head. Sea, sky and ground all seemed to be turning one universal grey-blue tint, and a horrible sort of stillness fell over everything. The women were all gathering at their doors, feeling that something awful was coming. No fewer than 200 fishermen and others are believed to have perished, the village of Eyemouth alone losing 129. So connected by intermarriage is the population of the villages and hamlets, that there is scarcely a family in any of them which is not called to mourn its dead. The scenes are heart-rending. Business in every shape and form is paralysed." *An image this, and yet how faint, of the cry that went up in Egypt that night, when in every house there was found one dead. Yet no stroke less severe would have served*

the purpose, and this one is to be studied in view of the fact that it *did* prove effectual for its end. Observe, 1. It was a *death-stroke*. Death has a singular power in subduing and melting the heart. It is the most powerful solvent God can apply to a rebellious nature. It is sometimes tried when gentler means have failed. God removes your idol. He lays your dear one in the dust. You have resisted milder influences, will you yield to this? Your heart is for the moment bowed and broken, will the repentance prove lasting, or will it be, like Pharaoh's, only for a time? 2. It is a *death-grip* upon the soul which is needed to make sin relax its hold upon it. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul" (Ps. cxvi. 3, 4). God comes in the preaching of his law, and lays his hand, a hand carrying death in it, upon the soul of the trembling transgressor, who then for the first time realises the fatal and unspeakably awful position in which he has placed himself by sin. It is a death-sentence which is written in his conscience. 3. That which completes the liberation of the soul is a view of the *meaning of the death of Christ*. Terror alone will not melt the heart. There is needed to effect this the influence of love. And where is love to be seen in such wonderful manifestation as at the Cross of Christ? What see we there? The first-born of the race expiring in awful agony under the judgment of God for *our* sins. Is not this a spectacle to melt the heart? It is powerful enough, if earnestly contemplated, to make the Pharaoh that is within us all relinquish his grip upon the captive spirit. What read we of the prospective conversion of Israel?—"They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born" (Zech. xii. 10). See again, Acts ii. 36, 37, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts," etc. Cf. also Rev. i. 7. The Cross inspires mourning—(1) By the spectacle it presents of holy suffering. (2) By the recollection of who it is that there suffers. (3) By the thought that it is *our own* sins which are the cause of this suffering. (4) By the thought that it is the judgment of God in the infliction of the curse of sin which the Holy one is thus enduring. (5) By the conviction of sin, and the dread of Divine justice, thus awakened. (6) Above all, by the infinite love shown in this gift of the Son, and in the Son's willingness to endure this awful agony and shame for our salvation.—J. O

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 31—36.—THE DISMISSAL. The first action seems to have been taken by Pharaoh. The "cry" of the people had no doubt been heard in the palace, and he was aware that the blow had not fallen on himself alone, and may have anticipated what the people's feelings would be; but he did not wait for any direct pressure to be put upon him before yielding. He sent his chief officers (ch. xi. 8) while it was still night (ch. xii. 31), to inform Moses and Aaron, not only that they might, but that they *must* take their departure immediately, with all the people, and added that they might take with them their flocks and herds. The surrender was thus complete; and it was accompanied by a request which we should scarcely have expected. Pharaoh craved at the hands of the two brothers a blessing! We are

not told how his request was received; but that it should have been made is a striking indication of how his pride was humbled. The overture from Pharaoh was followed rapidly by a popular movement, which was universal and irresistible. The Egyptians "rose up" everywhere, and "were urgent upon the people," to "send them out of the land in haste" (ver. 33); and to expedite their departure readily supplied them at their request with gold and silver and raiment (ver. 35), thus voluntarily spoiling themselves for the benefit of the foreigners. The Israelites, long previously prepared for the moment which had now arrived, made their final arrangements, and before the day was over a lengthy column was set in motion, and proceeded from Rameses, which seems to have been a suburb of Tanis (Brugsch, *Hist.*

of *Egypt*, vol. ii. pp. 96-99), to an unknown place called Succoth, which must have lain towards the south-east, and was probably not very remote from the capital.

Ver. 31.—And he called for Moses and Aaron. Kalisch understands this as a summons to the King's presence (*Commentary*, p. 130), and even supposes that the two brothers complied, notwithstanding what Moses had said (ch. x. 29). But perhaps no more is meant than at Pharaoh's instance Moses and Aaron were summoned to an interview with some of the Court officials (see ch. xi. 8). As ye have said. Literally, "according to your words." The reference is to such passages as ch. viii. 1, 20; ix. 1, 13.

Ver. 32.—Also take your flocks and your herds. Pharaoh thus retracted the prohibition of ch. x. 24, and "gave the sacrifices and burnt-offerings," which Moses had required (*ib. ver. 25*). Bless me also. Pharaoh was probably accustomed to receive blessings from his own priests, and had thus been led to value them. His desire for a blessing from Moses and Aaron, ere they departed, probably sprang from a conviction—based on the miracles which he had witnessed—that their intercession would avail more with God than that of his own hierarchy.

Ver. 33.—The Egyptians were urgent upon the people. The Egyptians feared that, if any further delay took place, the God of the Hebrews might not be content with slaying all the first-born, but might punish with death the whole nation, or at any rate all the males. It is easy to see how their desire to get rid of the Israelites would expedite matters, and enable all to set out upon the journey on the same day.

Ver. 34.—The people took their dough.

They probably regarded dough as more convenient for a journey than flour, and so made their flour into dough before starting; but they had no time to add leaven. Their kneading-troughs. This rendering is correct, both here and in the two other places where the word occurs (ch. viii. 3, and Dent. xxviii. 5). Kneading-troughs would be a necessity in the desert, and, if like those of the modern Arabs, which are merely small wooden bowls, would be light and portable. The dough and kneading-troughs, with perhaps other necessities, were carried, as the Arabs still carry many small objects, bound up in their clothes (*i.e.*, in the *beged* or ample shawl) upon their shoulders.

Ver. 35.—The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses. See above, ch. xi. 2. They borrowed. On this mistranslation, see the comment upon ch. iii. 22. It is plain that the gold and silver articles and the raiment, were free-will gifts, which the Egyptians never expected to see again, and which the Hebrews asked and took, but in no sense "borrowed." Hengstenberg and Kurtz have shown clearly that the primary meaning of the words translated "borrowed" and "lent," is "asked" and "granted," and that the sense of "borrowing" and "lending" is only to be assigned them when it is required by the context.

Ver. 36.—So that they lent unto them such things as they required. Rather, "So that they granted them what they asked." They spoiled the Egyptians. See the comment on ch. iii. 22, *ad fin.* The result was that the Israelites went forth, not as slaves, but as conquerors, decked with the jewels of the Egyptians, as though they had conquered and despoiled them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 31-36.—*Israel's going forth from Egypt a pattern to oppressed Churches.* Churches are sometimes enslaved and oppressed by the civil power. In unsuspecting confidence they have accepted the State's protection, and entered into certain relations with it, supposed to be mutually advantageous. But, as time has gone on, the terms of the original arrangement have been disregarded; the civil power has made encroachments, has narrowed the Church's liberties, has behaved oppressively towards it, has reduced it to actual slavery. A time comes at last when the bondage is felt to be intolerable; and the Church demands its liberty, claims to go out from under the yoke of the oppressor. Under such circumstances the following analogies are noticeable:

I. THE OPPRESSED CHURCH, LONG REFUSED THE LIBERTY WHICH IT HAS BEEN DRIVEN TO CLAIM, IS APT AT LAST TO BE "THRUST OUT" BY ITS OPPRESSOR. The early efforts of a down-trodden church after freedom are strenuously opposed, denounced as at once wrongful, foolish, and futile, sometimes punished by an increase in the oppression. The Church is set to "make bricks without straw." If this process fails, and the demand for freedom continues, the claims made are perhaps at the next stage derided. (See ch. v. 2.) They are then for a long time determinedly and persistently refused. If occasionally a seeming concession is made, it is scarcely made before it is

retracted. If still the Church will not give way, but continues the struggle, a crisis arrives. The State finds itself in difficulties. One inconvenience after another befalls it in consequence of the prolonged conflict. At length it comes to be felt that the inconveniences of the struggle exceed the benefits of the connection; and a sudden change of policy takes place. The Church is sent adrift; cut away like an encumbering mass of wreck; bidden to shift for itself, and trouble the State no more. The State is glad to be rid of it.

II. THE EMANCIPATED CHURCH FINDS ITSELF, ON EMANCIPATION, SURROUNDED BY DIFFICULTIES AND PERPLEXITIES. In the first place, the attitude of the State towards it is apt to be hostile; and an attempt may even be made to coerce it and force it to resume its old position. Apart from this, it labours under many disadvantages. It has recollections of the "flesh-pots of Egypt," which offer a strong contrast to the fare whereto it is reduced. It has to enter on a dull and wearisome course; to plod forward toilsomely, painfully. It finds its movements hampered by encumbrances. All these things are against it. But if the nerves be braced to bear, if the will be resolute to turn away from all thought of the "flesh-pots," if the fact of freedom be kept before the mind's eye and the old ills of slavery held in recollection, the difficulties of the early journey will pass away, the presence of God will be revealed, and after (it may be) forty years of trial, the wilderness will have been passed through, and there will be a triumphant entrance into Canaan.

III. THE EMANCIPATED CHURCH HAS A RIGHT TO TAKE WITH IT ALL ITS OWN PROPERTY, AND IS ENTITLED, IF OCCASION ARISE, TO "SPOIL THE EGYPTIANS." Moses and Aaron would not stir without their flocks and herds—the main wealth of a pastoral nation. "Not a hoof," they said, "should be left behind" (ch. x. 26). So the emancipated Church should take with her whatever is her own into the wilderness. She must not relinquish her property to the oppressor. It is really not hers, but God's: she is trustee to God for it. She is entitled to say that she "knows not with what she must serve the Lord till she is come out." And she is entitled to ask for parting gifts when she is about to quit a known shelter and to confront the perils and dangers of an unknown future. If God gives her favour in the eyes of those whom she is leaving, she will do well to require of them their silver and their gold and their raiment—all that they have most precious—and take it with her, not as "borrowed" wealth, but as endowment freely "given," intentionally made over for a permanence, out of goodwill and affection, or out of compassion and pity. She will find a proper use for all that is most rich and most rare in the service of the sanctuary.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Jer. 32.—Pharaoh's prayer. It has come then to this, that Pharaoh is glad to beg a blessing from the man whom at first he had so contemptuously spurned. "And bless me also."

I. THE WICKED MAN IS OFTEN MADE PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE MISERABLENESS OF HIS OWN PORTION, AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE GODLY. He may be, often is, even when he refuses to acknowledge it, secretly conscious of the superior happiness of the good man. There come times, however, when severe affliction, the sense of a gnawing inward dissatisfaction, or special contact of some kind with a man of genuine piety, extorts the confession from him. He owns that the good man has a standing in the Divine favour; enjoys an invisible Divine protection; and is the possessor of a peace, happiness, and inward support, to which his own wretched life is utterly a stranger.

II. THE WICKED MAN HAS SOMETIMES DESIRES AFTER A SHARE IN THE GOOD OF GOD'S PEOPLE. He envies them. He feels in his heart that he is wretched and miserable beside them, and that it would be happiness to be like them. He says with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num. xxiii. 10).

III. THE WICKED MAN, IN HIS TIME OF TROUBLE, WILL OFTEN HUMBLE HIMSELF TO BEG THE PRAYERS OF THE GODLY. And this, though but a little before, he has been persecuting them. He feels that the good man has power with God.

IV. THESE FEELINGS OF THE WICKED MAN ARE USUALLY TRANSIENT.—J. O.

Vers. 31—37.—*The dismissal.* The blow had been so measured by infinite wisdom as to produce precisely the desired effect. Pharaoh "called for Moses and Aaron by night," etc. Observe—

I. PHARAOH IS NOW AS ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF THE ISRAELITES AS FORMERLY HE WAS TO KEEP THEM. It had been predicted at the beginning that this would be the issue of God's dealings with him (ch. vi. 1). Note, 1. *Pharaoh's folly in resisting the demand of God so long.* He has to concede everything at last. Had he yielded at the beginning, he could have done so with honour, and with the happiest results to his dynasty and kingdom. As it is, he has gained nothing, and has lost much, nearly all. He has ruined Egypt, suffered severely in his own person, lost his first-born, and irretrievably forfeited his prestige in the eyes of his subjects. Foolish king! and yet the same unequal and profitless contest is being repeated in the history of every sinner! 2. *The dismissal is unconditional.* No more talk of leaving the little ones, or the flocks and herds; or even of returning after the three days' journey. Pharaoh wants no more to do with this fatal people. No one could any longer dream of the Israelites returning, or expect them to do so. They were "thrust out altogether" (ch. xi. 1). 3. *He seeks a blessing* (ver. 32). He wished Moses to leave a blessing behind him. He would be blessed, and still continue in his sins. Beyond letting Israel go, he had no intention of renouncing his idols, and becoming a worshipper of the God he had so long defied. Many would like to be blessed, while cleaving to their sins.

II. THE EGYPTIANS ARE AS EAGER AS THEIR MONARCH TO SEE THE ISRAELITES SAFELY OUT OF EGYPT. 1. *They were affrighted.* "They said, we be all dead men" (ver. 33). They were perfectly right. Had Israel been detained longer, their nation would have been destroyed. It would be well if every sinner had as clear a perception of the effects of persistence in his evil. 2. *They were urgent to send the people away.* Not simply because this was what Jehovah had commanded, but because they were terrified to have them in their midst any longer. The Israelites were a people of ill-omen to them. They wished to get rid of the nation at once and for ever. This is not without significance. We remember how the Gadarenes besought Jesus that he would depart out of their coasts (Matt. viii. 34). Worldly people have no liking for the company of the converted. Society bustles them out of its midst. Their old companions betray a singular uncomfortableness in their presence. They would rather have done with them. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job. xxi. 14). Alas! the world that desires to be rid of the society of God's people will one day get its wish. The separation they would fain hasten will take place, and for ever (Matt. xxv. 46). 3. *They were willing to buy the departure of Israel* (ver. 35, 36). The Israelites asked, and the Egyptians freely gave, of jewels of gold, of jewels of silver, and of raiment. Thus, singularly did Providence provide for the enriching of the people in the hour of their exodus. They went forth, not in squalor and disorder, but as a triumphant host, laden with the spoils of the enemy. The spoils of the world will yet turn to the enrichment of the Church.

III. THE ISRAELITES MAKE NO DELAY IN AVAILING THEMSELVES OF THE OPPORTUNITY OF FREEDOM (ver. 34). Pharaoh did not need to tell them twice to leave the land. Their dough was unleavened, but, binding up their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders, they prepared at once for departure. There are supreme moments in every man's history, the improvement or non-improvement of which will decide his salvation. Many other things at such a moment may need to be left undone; but the man is insane who does not postpone everything to the making sure of his deliverance. Such times are not indolently to be waited for. The Lord is to be sought at once. But God's ways of saving are varied. The seeking, as in Augustine's case, may go on a long time before God is found.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 37—39.—THE DEPARTURE. There are, no doubt, great difficulties in conceiving the departure on one day, from one place, of "six hundred thousand that were men, beside children." The difficulty is increased when we find (from Num. i. 3—43) that by "men" is meant males above twenty years of age. The entire body of Israelites is thus raised from over half a million to over two millions. The whole narrative, however, supposes some such number; and it is accepted by the best critics, as Ewald, Kalisch, Kurtz, Canon Cook, and others. As these two millions must have lived dispersed over a considerable space, and there could have been no advantage in their all assembling at Rameses (Tanis), we are probably to suppose the main body with Moses and Aaron to have started from that place, while the others, obeying orders previously given, started from all parts of Goshen, and converged upon Succoth, which was the first rendezvous. Each body of travellers was accompanied by its flocks and herds, and followed by a number of slaves, dependants, and sympathisers not of Hebrew birth (ver. 38), which still further enlarged their numbers. The extremely open character of the country, and the firmness of the soil at the time of year, would facilitate the journey. There was no marching along roads, which indeed did not exist. Each company could spread itself out at its pleasure, and go its own pace. All knew the point of meeting, and marched towards it, in converging lines, there being no obstacle to hinder them. Arrived in the vicinity of Succoth, they could bivouac without hurt, in that fine climate, in the open air.

Ver. 37.—From Rameses. It has been doubted whether this "Rameses" is the same place as the "Raamses" of ch. i. 11. But the doubt scarcely seems to be reasonable. The two words differ only in the pointing. Brugsch has clearly shown that Rameses (Pa-Ramesu) was a town newly built in the reign of Rameses II., partly erected by himself, in the immediate vicinity of the old city of Tanis or Zoan. It was the favourite capital of both

Rameses II. and Menephtah. (See Brugsch, *Hist. of Egypt*, vol. ii. pp. 96 and 128.) **Succoth.** The meaning of the word "Succoth" is "booths." Mr. Greville Chester tells us that "huts made of reeds" are common at the present day in the tract south-east of Tanis, and suggests that the Succoth here mentioned may have been at Salahiveh, fifteen miles due south of Tanis. Tel-Defneh, at the same distance to the south-east, is perhaps a more probable site. **Six hundred thousand.** See the Introductory paragraph. At the time of the numbering recorded in Num. i., the males above twenty years of age were 625,550. **Beside children.** Rather, "beside families." The word used includes all the women, and the children under twenty.

Ver. 38.—A mixed multitude went up also with them. Kalisch supposes that these strangers were native Egyptians, anxious to escape the tyranny of the kings. Canon Cook suggests that they were "remains of the old Semitic population" of the Eastern provinces. Perhaps it is more probable that they consisted of fugitives from other subject races (as the Shartana) oppressed by the Pharaohs. We have again mention of this "mixed multitude" in Num. xi. 4, where we find that they were the first to regret the "flesh and the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic" which they had eaten in Egypt freely (ib. 5). They thus set a bad example, which the Israelites followed. **And flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.** Compare ch. x. 26. It has been noticed that this is important, as lessening the difficulties connected with the sustentation of the Israelites in the wilderness. But it increases, on the other hand, the difficulties connected with the march, and with the possibility of finding pasture for such large flocks and herds in the Sinaitic peninsula.

Ver. 39. Unleavened cakes. Some of the modern Arabs make such cakes by simply mixing flour with water, and attaching flat circular pieces of the dough thus formed to the sides of their ovens after they have heated them. (Niebuhr, *Description de l'Arabie*, p. 45, and pl. 1, F.) Others put a lump of dough into the ashes of a wood fire, and cover it over with the embers for a short time (Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 288). All Arab bread is unleavened. **They were thrust out of Egypt.** Compare ver. 33

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 37—38. In the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, after they had received permission to set out, two things are principally remarkable: 1. All were of one mind—none hung back; 2. A mixed multitude cast in their lot with them, elected to accompany them, and resolved to share their fortunes. The first of these two facts shows—

I. THAT IN TIMES OF EXCITEMENT, UNDER DIVINE GUIDANCE, A WHOLE NATION WILL ACT AS ONE MAN. Critical times are favourable to the formation of a national spirit. Let a powerful invader threaten a people, and differences are at once forgotten, quarrels made up, party spirit held in abeyance. All unite with equal zeal against the common enemy. Or again, let any wave of strong feeling come upon a people, desire of unity, or of freedom, or of taking part in a great enterprise, like the crusades, and much the same unanimity prevails. Such a spirit is found among the Jews who returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel, when in the seventh month they “gathered themselves together to Jerusalem as one man” (Ezr. iii. 1), to set up the altar of burnt offerings. Such a spirit appears again in the time of Nehemiah, when all the people with one accord kept a solemn fast on the 24th of Tisri (Nehem. ix. 1), and then “sealed to the covenant” (*ibid* x. 1—29). But it was not very frequently exhibited. When proclamation was made by Cyrus the Great that all Israelites who chose might quit his dominions and “go up to Jerusalem and build the house of the Lord” (Ezr. i. 3), it was only a portion of the nation, “whose spirit God had raised,” that went forth. But now the whole people was of one mind. Braced by the severe discipline of suffering, their spirits raised—their whole moral tone exalted—by the long series of signs and wonders which they had witnessed, encouraged by the Divine promise of a “land flowing with milk and honey,” and confident in the leadership of Moses, they all arose “as one man,” left their abodes, their lands, their farming implements, their utensils, their furniture, and started for the rendezvous of Succoth. Such waves of popular feeling have been known from time to time, but scarcely to this extent. When Oubacha started on Jan. 5, 1771, with 70,000 families of Calmucks (420,000 persons) from the banks of the Volga for China, 15,000 families remained behind (De Hell, *Travels in the Steppes*, p. 227). But God now inspired the whole Israelite nation with one unanimous feeling; and all left Egypt together. The other fact shows—

II. THAT THE ENTHUSIASM OF A UNITED NATION IS CONTAGIOUS, AND EXCITES OTHERS BEYOND ITS LIMITS TO FOLLOW ITS EXAMPLE. The contagious character of a revolutionary spirit has often been noticed. Even the war spirit, when strongly felt, is apt to be contagious, and to overleap national boundaries. Here we see that a righteous enthusiasm will also, on some occasions, catch hold of those seemingly beyond its range, who are in contact with it, and sweep such alien elements into its vortex. The “mixed multitude” who joined the Israelites had none of the reasonable grounds for hoping to better their condition than the Israelites had; but they entertained nevertheless expectations of, somehow or other, sharing in their advantages. They may have contained, 1. Some native Egyptians, connected with the Hebrews by marriage, for the example of Joseph is likely to have been followed; 2. Some slaves anxious for freedom; 3. Some members of oppressed races, held to labour in Egypt, as the Israelites had been. The later facts of the history show—

III. THAT NEITHER OF THESE TWO FORMS OF ENTHUSIASM IS TO BE RELIED UPON AS PERMANENT. The enthusiasm of Israel cooled wonderfully when they found themselves shut in between the host of Pharaoh and the Red Sea (ch. xiv. 10—12). It was revived by the safe passage through the sea, but faded again rapidly under the toils and the monotony of the wilderness. Nor was that of the “mixed multitude” more lasting. They appear to have been the first to grow sick of the continual manna, and to have “lusted” after the rich and varied diet of Egypt (Num. xi. 4). The Israelites were seduced by them into similar misconduct; and the quails, and the plague which followed the quails (*ib.* 31—33), were the consequence. Enthusiasm is a thing with which we cannot dispense; as a motive force for initiating a great movement, it is invaluable; but we must not trust to it for the accomplishment of anything which requires long and sustained effort. It is an abnormal and excessive stir of feeling, which must be followed by re-action. As it dies away, we must seek to supply its place by the ever increasing force of habit, which may be depended on for continuance.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

Vers. 37—40.—*The exodus as a fact in history.* The exodus from Egypt lay at the foundation of the national life of Israel. It appears in the history as a supernatural work of God. The subsequent legislation assumes it to have possessed this character. The bond of covenant declared to exist between the people and Jehovah had its ground in the same transaction. They were God's people, and were bound to adhere to him, and to obey his laws, because he had so marvellously redeemed them. Every motive and appeal in the later books is drawn from the assumed truth of the events related here, and of those which happened afterwards in the wilderness. Obviously, therefore, the history of Israel presupposes the truth of *this* history; while if the narrative of the exodus, as here recorded, is admitted to be true, we are in immediate contact with supernatural facts of the most stupendous order. We do not mean to discuss the question in detail, but the following points may be indicated as suitable for popular treatment.

I. OBJECTIONS. We touch only on that which relates to the number of the people (ver. 37). The difficulty here is two-fold. 1. To account for the growth of the nation of Israel from seventy persons to over 2,000,000 in the space of time allowed for that increase. On this see the exposition. The difficulty is not serious (1) if we take the plain wording of the history, and admit that the sojourn in Egypt lasted 430 years (ver. 40); (2) if we do the narrative the justice of allowing it to remain consistent with itself, the increase, on its own showing, being exceptional and marvellous (ch. i. 7, 14, 20). (3) If we admit that the descendants of the households which doubtless accompanied Jacob into Egypt, are included in the numbers. But this supposition, however probable in itself, is really not necessary to vindicate the numbers. The truth is, that granting a highly exceptional rate of increase, with 430 years to increase in, the numbers, as will be seen on calculation, appear small, rather than too great. They certainly could not have been much less than the history makes them. The problem is quite soluble even on the hypothesis of the shorter reckoning, in favour of which there is not a little to be said (see Birk's "Exodus of Israel"). 2. To account for the possibility of so vast a multitude, including women and children, with flocks and herds, effecting an exodus in a single night (and day). The feat in question is certainly unparalleled in history. Even granting what the narrative (as against Colenso) makes perfectly clear, that the Israelites were in a state of tolerably complete organisation, had ample warning to prepare for starting on that particular night, and had for months been on the tip-toe of expectation, as plague after plague descended on Egypt, it is still an event so stupendous as to be difficult of realisation. The narrative itself, however, does not fail to represent it as very extraordinary. And in pronouncing on its possibility, there are several circumstances not always, perhaps, sufficiently taken into account. Justice is not always done (1) to the perfectly superhuman efforts a nation can sometimes make in a great crisis of its history. Even an individual, at a time when feeling is highly strained, is capable of efforts and achievements, which, to read of them in cold blood, we might judge to be impossible. (2) To the order and discipline of which masses of people become capable when called to face an emergency on which they feel that existence itself depends. The picture sometimes drawn of a disorderly rabble pouring out of Egypt has no foundation in the history, and is false to psychology and experience. The narratives of shipwrecks (the Kent, the London, etc.), show us what crowds are capable of in the way of order and discipline, even with certain death staring them in the face. When a people, under the influence of one great overmastering idea, are called upon to execute difficult movements, or to unite their efforts towards one great end, it is incredible what they can accomplish. The feeling of solidarity takes possession of them. They are of one heart and soul. The mass moves and works as if one mind possessed it, as if it were a machine. Orders are obeyed with promptitude; movements are executed with rapidity and regularity; men are lifted for the time out of their littlenesses, and display a spirit of willingness, of helpfulness, and of self-sacrifice truly wonderful. All these conditions were present on the night of the exodus: the result was what might have been anticipated—the people were brought out with wonderful rapidity, and in regular order; "they went up harnessed"—"five in a

rank" (ch. xiii. 18). (3) We must add to these considerations, the singularly exalted state of the religious consciousness in the companies of the Israelites. Everything in their position combined to awe and solemnize them; to fill them with an overmastering consciousness of the Divine presence; to inspire them with boundless and grateful joy, yet a joy tempered with the awful sense of death, as forced upon them by the destruction of the first-born, and the lamentations of the bereaved Egyptians. This also would exercise a powerful and steady influence upon their thoughts and behaviour, and would aid them in taking their measures with decision and speed.

II. PROOFS. Those who pile up the difficulties of the Bible seldom do justice to the difficulties on the other side. We have to ask—1. Is it not absurd to say that so extraordinary an event as, in any case, this exodus of Israel from Egypt must be admitted to have been, happened in the full light of the most powerful civilisation of ancient times, while yet the people who came out did not know, or could not remember, or could ever possibly forget *how* it happened? (Cf. ver. 42.) The Israelites themselves did not believe that they did not know. They had but one story to give of it—the story that rings down in their psalms to latest generations—the same story which, with minute circumstantial detail, is embodied in these chapters. 2. If this is not how the children of Israel got out of Egypt, will the critic show us how they *did* get out? It is admitted on all hands that they were once in; that they were in bondage; that Egypt was at that time ruled by one or other of its most powerful monarchs; that they came out; yet did not come out by war, but peaceably. How then did they make their way out? If the whole history was different from that of which we have a record, how came it that no echo of it was preserved in Israel, and that this sober and matter-of-fact relation has come to take its place? 3. There is the institution of the Passover—a contemporary memorial. We have already expressed our belief that this ordinance was of a kind which could not have been set up at a time later than the events professedly commemorated by it. Glance at the alternative hypothesis. The basis of the institution, we are asked to believe, was an ancient spring festival, on which were grafted by degrees, as the tradition formed, the rites and ideas of a later age. This hypothesis, however, is not only unproved, but violates every law of historical probability. It must in any case be admitted (1) that the exodus took place at the time of the alleged agricultural festival. (2) That the festival thereafter assumed a new character, and was observed, in addition to its agricultural reference, as a memorial of the escape from Egypt. (3) That the use of unleavened bread in connection with it had reference to the haste of the flight. (4) Further, that an essential part of this festival was the offering of a sacrifice. (5) That, being at bottom a spring festival, it must have been observed, with but few interruptions, all down the later history of Israel. But if so much is admitted, we seem driven to admit more. For it is undeniable that the festival, as observed among the Jews, was connected *most especially of all* with the fact of a great judgment, which was believed to have fallen on Egypt on the night of the exodus, and from which the Israelites had been mercifully delivered by the sprinkling of the lamb's blood upon the door-posts; a memorial of which was preserved in the name (Pass-over). "The relation to the natural year expressed in the Passover, was less marked than that in Pentecost or Tabernacles, while its historical import is deeper and more pointed. That part of its ceremonies which has a direct agricultural reference—the offering of the omer—holds a very subordinate place." (Dict. of the Bible.) It is for the sceptic, therefore, to explain how that which enters into the inmost meaning and heart of the observance, could possibly have been engrafted on it as an accident at a later period—yet a period not later than accords with the ritual prescribed in these very ancient written laws: how, moreover, the people could not only be persuaded to accept this new reading of an old familiar ordinance, *but to believe that they had never known any other*: that this had been the meaning and ritual of the ordinance from the beginning. 4. We have not as yet alluded to the Pentateuch, but of course the fact is not to be overlooked that the work before us claims to be historical; that it was probably written wholly or in large part by Moses himself; and that in style, circumstantially, vividness of narration, and minute accuracy of reference, it bears all the marks of a true and contemporary history.—J. O.

Ver. 38.—*The mixed multitude.* The mass of this mixed multitude which left

Egypt with Moses, would consist of foreign settlers in the Delta, victims, like the Hebrews, of the tyranny of the Pharaohs, and, like them, glad to take this opportunity of making their escape (cf. ch. i. 10). The enthusiasm of a great body of people is contagious. When the Israelites left Egypt, numbers would be moved to leave with them. Recent events, too, had doubtless produced a powerful impression on these mixed populations; and knowing that God was with Israel, they naturally expected great benefits from joining the departing nation. They had not calculated on the trials of the desert, and afterwards "fell a-lusting" (Num. xi. 4), provoking Israel to sin, and bringing wrath upon the camp.

I. MULTITUDES JOIN THE RANKS OF THE CHURCH WHO HAVE LITTLE IN COMMON WITH HER SPIRIT AND AIMS. They are like the mixed crowd of hangers-on, which left Egypt with Israel. Their ideas, traditions, customs, maxims of life, habits of thought and feeling generally, are foreign to those of the true Israel of God. Yet they are moved to join the Church—1. From motives of self-interest. 2. Under transient convictions. 3. Caught by a wave of religious enthusiasm. 4. Under partial apprehensions of the importance of religion. 5. Because others are doing it. They hang of necessity on the outskirts of the Church, taking little interest in her work, and acting as a drag upon her progress.

II. THERE ARE MANY BY WHOM THE CHURCH WILL NOT BE BENEFITED, WHOSE ADHERENCE SHE IS YET NOT ENTITLED TO REFUSE. The "mixed multitude" were not forbidden to go with Israel. Because, perhaps, they could not altogether be prevented. It is kindlier, however, to believe that Israel allowed the mixed crowd to accompany it, in the hope of ultimately incorporating them with the people of Jehovah. The Church is certainly not at liberty to encourage nominal adherence. She must do her very utmost to dissuade men from mere empty profession. Neither to swell her numbers, nor to add to her wealth, nor to increase her respectability in the eyes of the world, nor under a mistaken idea of "comprehension," must she open her doors to those who are known to be ungodly, or who give no evidence of serious religious intentions. Yet neither must she draw her lines too stringently. She must not presume to judge the heart, or to deal with men otherwise than on the ground of their professed motives and beliefs. She must teach, exhort, warn, and rigorously exclude all whose lives are openly inconsistent with the Gospel; but she must at the same time exercise great charity, and rather include ten who may possibly prove unworthy, than mistakenly exclude one whom Christ would be willing to receive. The responsibility in the matter of religious profession must, in great measure, be allowed to rest with the individual who professes. The Church is to consider, not only what is best for *her*, but the duty she owes to the world, in laying hold of those who are yet very imperfect, and training them for Christ.

III. NOMINAL ADHERENTS, HOWEVER, ARE NO SOURCE OF STRENGTH, BUT A GREAT WEAKNESS TO THE CHURCH. It may be the Church's duty to bear with them, but she can never derive benefit from them. She may benefit *them*, and in that hope should treat them tenderly, but they will never benefit *her*. They will be a drag upon her activity. In proportion to their numbers they will exert a chilling and detrimental influence. They will stand in the way of good schemes. They will "fall a-lusting," and provoke discontent. The *morale* of a Church can scarcely avoid being lowered by them. What then? Put them out? Not so. We shall work in vain to separate tares and wheat, and we are forbidden to act on this principle (Matt. xiii. 24—31). But, 1. Let us do what we can to keep down their number. Many churches and church office-bearers are greatly to blame for the indiscriminate way in which they receive persons to communion. We are bound to abide by the principles above laid down; but consistently with these principles it should be our care to keep down nominal adherence as far as that is possible. Many of the character of the "mixed multitude" will find their way into the Church without our seeking for them, or giving them any encouragement. 2. Let us do what we can to change their nominal adherence into real adherence. Seek their good. Be not overcome by their evil, but try to overcome *it* by superior goodness. 3. Beware of their influence, and seek to keep it in check.—J. O.

Vers. 29—42.—*Egypt's sorrow: Israel's joy.* I. THE JUDGMENT OF EGYPT THE EMBLEM AND PROMISE OF THE WORLD'S JUDGMENT. 1. The time of visitation; midnight, when all were wrapt in deepest slumber and, notwithstanding the warning which had

been given, busy only with dreams. The world will be surprised in the midst of its false security. "As it was in the days of Noe," etc. 2. Its universality. There were none so high that God's hand did not reach them, and none so low that they were overlooked. 3. The after anguish. The whole nation, steeped the one moment in deceitful slumber, the next torn with the most heartrending and hopeless grief. Their sin had slain their dearest and best. 4. It is a hopeless sorrow. Their grief cannot bring back their dead. The anguish of the wicked, like Esau's, will find no place for repentance.

II. THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL THE EMBLEM AND PROMISE OF THE FULL ENFRANCHISEMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. All that God had ever asked for them is granted. The demand for freedom to the people of God, and the breaking of the yoke laid upon the poor, will yet be obeyed in fear by the persecutor and the oppressor. 2. It is pressed upon them with all the eagerness of deadly fear. Israel never so desired the boon as the Egyptians that they should now accept it. The persecutors will come and worship at the Church's feet. 3. They go forth laden with the treasures of Egypt (Isaiah lx. 5—17). 4. They go forth awed by the proof of God's faithfulness. To a day had he kept the promise given to the fathers (ver. 41). The prophecies, now dim and misunderstood, will then be read in the light of God's deeds, and like Israel of old, we shall know that God has kept the appointed time.—U.

Vers. 29—42.—*March at midnight.* "This is that night of Jehovah" (Ex. xii. 42). Observe the striking words of the text! "The night of Jehovah," a night in which he specially appeared and acted on behalf of Israel. For a description of the scenery of this eventful night see Dr. W. M. Taylor's "Moses," 99—101. In the treatment of this subject considerable exposition will be necessary. For material, see expository section of this commentary. It may, in order to include all important points, be marshalled thus (under each head we give suggestive hints):—

I. THE HAND THAT SMOTE. Most, if not all the nine earlier plagues, had a natural basis, the tenth had none. It was purely supernatural. They blended mercy (first warning and then withdrawal) with judgment. This was pure judgment. In them there was indeed a call to faith, but also room for unbelief. The demonstrations of God are seldom absolute. But the tenth judgment was awfully impressive. There is very little evidence of any secondary instrumentality, angelic, or any other; but see in the Heb. xii. 13, 23. Jehovah this time smote with his own hand.

II. THE VICTIMS. First-borns. Of all beasts. Of men. But here distinguish between the first-borns of fathers and of mothers. In the tenth plague it was so, that the first-borns of mothers were the destroyed (xiii. 2). Now, these were the "sanctified" unto the Lord, first, as "living sacrifices," and as representing the consecration of each family, and then of the entire nation. But failing this consecration, their lives were forfeited. This was the case at that moment with the Israelites and Egyptians alike. In the case of the Egyptians the life of the first-born was taken, in that of the Israelites stoned for. Hence emerges a law of the Kingdom of God, that every soul that will not voluntarily consecrate himself to the Lord, must involuntarily come under the cloud of condemnation.

III. THE OBJECTIVE. The gods of Egypt (Ex. xii. 12). This was so with the nine plagues, it was especially so with the tenth. The heir to the throne was regarded as an incarnation of the Deity; by this plague God pronounced him common clay with the rest. But the first-born of animals also fell. This was a blow against the animal worship of the land.

IV. COMPLETENESS OF THE VICTORY. Here discuss whether Pharaoh's permission was conditioned or unconditioned; and show that with Pharaoh's resistance God's demands increased, and that the king's surrender must have been absolute, in spite of xiv. 8, 9. Note the pathos of the prayer of the now broken-hearted, "Bless me also," xii. 32.

V. THE BATTLE ARRAY. See xiii. 18. Perhaps a good translation, instead of "harnessed," would be "militant," as including the outer armedness, and the inner valorous and jubilant spirit; both which ideas are in the original. Observe; the nine or ten months of preparation, the organisation in which the "elders" and Hebrew "clerks" of the works may have taken part, the arms they surely possessed, as witness the battle at Rephidim—how probably they had become marshalled into detachments—and places of rendezvous been appointed.

VI. THE FESTAL RAIMENT. Israel "asked," Egypt "gave," under Divine influence (xii. 36), gold, silver, and raiment; these might be regarded as the "spoils" of Israel's victory, under God. These spoils were such as women might ask of women (see iii. 22—"neighbour" is Feminine in the Hebrew), and such as women value. They were to be put not only on themselves, but on sons and daughters. The contributions of the Egyptian women must have been immense in quantity and value. Now then, *why* this spoiling? That Israel might march, not like a horde of dirty, ragged slaves, but in festal array. Compared with the slavery of Egypt the future might have been one long holiday, one holy day unto the Lord.

VII. PARTAKERS OF THE JOY (xii. 38). Low caste people probably; even as it is at this day in the mission field of India. But the lesson is obvious—the Lord's salvations are for the sinful, the outcast, and the miserable.

VIII. TRUTHS SUGGESTED. 1. The moment of salvation is *the beginning of a new time*. Israel's history as a nation dates from that night (xii. 2). So the history of a soul dates from its conversion to God. 2. The new time is *a festal time*. 3. The redeemed should *assume festal attire* (Luke xv. 22), a bright eye, a cheerful countenance, etc. 4. Still he must *don armour*, and *the Church must be militant*. 5. The Church should *welcome all comers*; for the miserable need salvation, and the most rude are capable of some service. Comp. Deut. xxix. 11, with Ex. xii. 38. 6. The salvations of God *are full-orbed in their completeness*. From the months of preparation till Israel went out in festal array, all was complete. 7. The moment of salvation is *to be held in everlasting remembrance* (see Ex. xii. 42). So of the still greater salvation.—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 40—42.—The narrative of the departure from Egypt is followed, not unnaturally, by a notification of the length of the sojourn, which is declared to have been a space of four hundred and thirty years. In the "Introduction" to the Book, we have examined the question, which here arises, 1. As to the soundness; and 2. As to the true meaning, of the Hebrew text, and have arrived at the conclusion that it is sound, and that it means what it says, viz., that 430 years elapsed between the arrival of Jacob in Egypt, with his sons, and sons' sons, and their families, as related in Gen. xli. 1—27, and the commencement of the exodus. The time is required by the genealogy of Joshua (1 Chr. vii. 22—27). It is in remarkable accordance with the traditions that Joseph was the minister of Aepi, and that the Jews went out under Menephthah. If not absolutely required for the multiplication of the race from "seventy souls" to above two millions, it is at any rate more in accord with that fact than the alternative number, 215. It is

twice repeated, so that "the mistake of a copyist" is almost impossible.

Ver. 40.—The sojourning of the children of Israel, which dwelt in Egypt. Rather, "Which they sojourned in Egypt." (Compare the Septuagint—*ἡ κατοίκησις ἣν κατέκησαν*.) Four hundred and thirty years. Literally "thirty years and four hundred years."

Ver. 41.—The self-same day . . . all the hosts went out. The setting forth upon the journey is regarded as the "going out"—not the actual exit, which was only effected by the passage of the Red Sea.

Ver. 42.—It is a night to be much observed. We must suppose that some of the Israelites actually commenced their march before the night was over, being "hastened" by the Egyptians (ver. 33), and having all things in readiness; but the bulk of the people can scarcely have started before day-break. This is that night of the Lord—i.e., the night concerning which directions had been already given (vers. 6—11)—the only "night" for which any observances were appointed. In their generations. To all time—so long as they continue to be a people. On the bindingness of this commandment, see the comment on ver. 14 of this chapter.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 40—42.—*God's discipline of his chosen ones.* I. THE TRIALS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SEVERE, BUT HAVE A JOYFUL END AT LAST. The sojourn in Egypt was from first to last an affliction (Gen. xv. 13). It was only on account of the famine in Canaan

that Jacob consented to change his abode and his condition. In Canaan he and his had been free; had "served" no one; had lived like the sons of the desert. But in Egypt, even during the lifetime of Joseph, they entered on a species of servitude. Not only were they Pharaoh's subjects, but to some extent his servants (Gen. xlvii. 6). They were no longer free to come and go as they chose. They had a certain province assigned to them. They had, it is probable, to pay rent for their lands (Gen. xlvii. 26). After a certain time, during which they suffered only this "light affliction," the severe oppression began. Their lives were "made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field" (Ex. i. 14); then their children were massacred (*ib.* ver. 22); lastly, they were required to "make bricks without straw" (ch. v. 7—19). So with God's people generally. They are given a time of suffering. They have to learn to "endure hardness." But God afflicts them as a discipline, and makes even their worst afflictions tend to their growth in grace. At last their trial time is over. Sometimes in this world, oftener in another, they find their Canaan, and "enter into rest."

II. THE TRIAL-TIME SEEMS LONG; BUT GOD DETERMINES ITS LENGTH, AND APPORTIONS IT TO THE NEEDS OF THE PARTICULAR CASE. Four hundred and thirty years is a long space, even in the life of a nation. It is about the period of time which separates us from the rebellion of Jack Cade and the commencement of the "Wars of the Roses." The severe oppression of Israel was not, however, nearly so long as this. Perhaps it lasted only about a century. In any case, times and seasons are in God's hands, and as he fixed four centuries for the entire servitude many years before it began (Gen. xv. 13), so, we may be sure, he fixed the term in his own counsels for the severe oppression. And it is doubtless the same with individuals. God knows what kind and length of chastisement they need, and assigns to each of his chosen ones the term of suffering that is needful for him.

III. IF THE TRIAL-TIME ENDS HERE, AND A SEASON OF HAPPINESS SUPERVENES, IT IS WELL TO OBSERVE YEARLY THE DAY OF THE CHANGE AS A DAY OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD. As national mercies are rightfully commemorated by national "days of thanksgiving," so the special blessings vouchsafed to individuals should receive private commemoration. The day, or night, that brought us out of the Egypt of sin, is especially worthy of such honour. Wherever known, it should be "observed unto the Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 40—43.—*The Exodus.* View it in three lights.

I. AS AN EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES. God is the sworn foe of the slave-holder. Only in a very modified sense was slavery tolerated in Israel; and the laws were such as gradually to undermine the system. Historically, God's religion has proved itself the great slave-liberator. 1. In *Egypt*. Here were two millions of a slave population set free in a single night. 2. In *Israel*. Consider the effect on the abolition of the slave system of the single precept in ver. 44 of this chapter. The slave sat down with his master on equal terms at the board of the passover. The same thing happened in the Christian Church. When the Lord's Supper was dispensed, the Christian slave remained; the master, if he was only a catechumen or a penitent, retired. 3. In *Christian countries*. Christianity, it is true, did not preach a crusade against slavery—a course which would only have led to a slave-revolt—but it inculcated truths and principles which undermined the system. Slavery was the corner-stone of the ancient civilisations. Philosophers defended it. The pagan religions did nothing to overthrow it. But the Christian Church took up from the very first the cause of the slave. The master who ill-treated his slave was excommunicated. He was compelled to marry the female slave whom he had seduced. He sat with his slave at the Lord's table. The slave might hold office in the church, and thus become, in a spiritual point of view, the superior of his master. The influence of the Church was used to secure the liberation of the slave. Under Domitian, a prefect of Rome, named Chromatius, freed one thousand four hundred slaves who had become Christians, saying, "Those who have become the children of God ought to be no longer slaves of men." Says J. S. Mill, "In an age when the weak were prostrate at the feet of the strong, who was there but the Church?"

to plead to the strong for the weak?" (Dissert. ii. 155): 'The emancipation of four millions of American slaves—so long a blot on a so-called Christian civilisation—has been accomplished in our sight, a second exodus. "We can say to-day that, with some trifling exceptions, the soil of Christian nations is free from the disgrace of slavery. Under what influences have the efforts been produced which have brought about such a result? We have only to look at recent facts, and we see the whole clearly. What men, in the middle of last century, were the first to advocate and emancipate slaves? The Quakers of America, who held that bondage was contrary to the Gospel. What men have pleaded the cause of the negroes in the English Parliament with the most power and perseverance? Decided Christians—Wilberforce and Buxton. What spirit animated the book called *Uncle Tom*, which acted so powerfully upon opinion in favour of the negroes? A spirit steadfastly Christian. To what sentiment did the Czar of Russia appeal, when he gave liberty to twenty millions of men? Read his proclamation of Feb. 19th, 1864." (Ernest Naville.) Revealed religion—the religion of the Bible, is thus the great liberator of the slave.'

II. AS A TEMPORAL DELIVERANCE OF THE CHURCH. Many such deliverances has the Church, both in Old and in New Testament times, experienced since. Deliverances under the Judges; destruction of Sennacherib; edict of Cyrus, and return from captivity; Maccabaean Era. Read Christian Church history. See the Church emerging triumphant, laden with the spoils of the foe, from the days of persecution under the Roman Emperors. Later instances in the Albigenes, in the Lollards of England, in the Huguenots of France, in the Covenanters of Scotland, etc.

III. AS A TYPE OF A GREATER DELIVERANCE THAN ITSELF. Redemption from sin and wrath through Christ. See previous Homilies.—J. O.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 43—51. — SUPPLEMENTARY ORDINANCE WITH RESPECT TO THE PASSOVER. The position of these verses is curious. We should have expected them to have followed immediately on ver. 20, or else to have been reserved for the further consideration of the subject in ch. xliii. It is suggested, in order to account for their place, that they formed the matter of a special revelation made to Moses at Succoth. They comprise three main points:—1. The absolute exclusion of all uncircumcised persons from participation in the passover rite; 2. The extension of the rite (implied in ver. 19) to all full proselytes; and, 3. The injunction that not a bone of the lamb should be broken. (This last is repeated in Num. ix. 12.)

Vers. 43.—This is the ordinance of the passover—i.e., "This is *the* law, in respect of the persons who are to partake of it"—there shall no stranger eat thereof, or literally, "No son of a stranger shall eat thereof." By a "stranger" here is meant one of a foreign race who wishes to retain his foreign character and to remain uncircumcised. Compare ver. 48.

Ver. 44.—Every man's servant that is bought for money. Or "every man's slave." The Mosaic Law found servitude existing, and left it existing, only guarding against its

extreme abuses (ch. xxi. 20—27). It put no check on the traffic in slaves. When thou hast circumcised him. The Jewish commentators say, that the desire of the slave to receive the rite and become a Jew is here implied. But it would seem rather, that opposition and refusal is not thought of as possible (see Gen. xvii 13, 17). The case is like that of baptism among the barbarous nations, where no sooner was the king converted than a general order went forth for the baptism of his subjects, which no one thought of resisting. Then shall he eat thereof. It was a principle of the Jewish law that the slaves should be admitted to complete religious equality with the native Israelites. (Compare Lev. xxii. 11.)

Ver. 45.—A foreigner. Literally "a sojourner"—i.e., a foreigner who is merely passing through the land, or staying for a time, without intending to become a permanent resident. The Septuagint *ἀπόκοιτος* well expresses the meaning. An hired servant. It is assumed that the "hired servant" will be a foreigner; and intended to guard against any compulsion being put upon him.

Ver. 46.—In one house shall it be eaten. Compare the directions in vers. 3—10, which imply this, and see the comment on ver. 10. Neither shall ye break a bone of it. Kalisch thinks that the lamb was a symbol of the unity of the nation, and was therefore not to have any of its bones broken. This view may be a true one, without being exhaustive. If

may have been to mark the unity of the Church in Christ that his bones were not broken, and in view especially of *that* unity, that the type was made to correspond in this particular with the antitype. (See John xix. 33--36.)

Ver. 47.—All the congregation . . . shall keep it. Rather “shall sacrifice it.” (Compare ver. 6.)

Vers. 48, 49.—And when a stranger, etc. Here we have the positive ordinance corresponding to the implied permission in ver. 19, and modifying in the most important and striking way the prohibitive enactment of ver. 43. The “stranger,” even if he only “sojourned” in the land, was to be put on exactly the same spiritual footing as the Israelite (“One law shall be,” etc.) if only he and his would be circumcised, and so enter into covenant.

Ver. 50.—Thus did all the children of Israel—*i. e.*, the Israelites, at their first passover, acted in accordance with these precepts, especially in admitting to the feast all circumcised persons, whether natives or foreigners, and rejecting all the uncircumcised.

Ver. 51.—This verse should be transferred to the commencement of the next chapter, which should run as follows:—“And it came to pass—on the self-same day that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies—that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,” etc. The word “armies,” which at first sight may seem inappropriate, occurs also in ch. vi. 26. It is probably intended to mark that the people were thoroughly organised, and marshalled in divisions resembling those of an army.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 41—50.—*Passover precepts realised in Christian practice.* The precepts were:—

I. THAT NO UNCIRCUMCISED STRANGER, NOT EVEN THOUGH A HIRED SERVANT IN A HEBREW FAMILY, SHOULD EAT OF IT. Formally, baptism corresponds to circumcision, both of them admitting into covenant with God; and thus the rule of Christian communities generally, that the reception of baptism must precede that of the Lord's Supper, is a carrying out of this precept. But it is also carried out in another way. Spiritually, the correspondent to the circumcision of the flesh is the circumcision of the spirit; and thus all Churches which warn the wicked from approaching the Lord's table, do their best to enforce the precept, “No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.” Hired servants of the Church, unless circumcised in heart, are as unfit to communicate as those who have no external connection with Divine things. Nay, may we not say more unfit?

II. THAT ALL THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL, FREEMEN AND SLAVES ALIKE, SHOULD EAT OF IT. The frequent exhortation of all Christian Churches to all their members to receive the Communion, especially at Easter-time, and the general allowance of the duty by those who have any real sense of religion constitute a realisation, to a considerable extent, of this precept in Christian practice. It is to be wished that the realisation were complete. The joint participation of freemen with slaves has always characterised the Christian Church; and though there have been Christian communities which have acted differently, the cases are too exceptional to deserve much notice, and are disappearing as slavery disappears.

III. THAT IT SHOULD BE EATEN IN ONE PLACE, AND NONE OF IT CARRIED FORTH. Churches which allow not only reservation, but the carrying forth of the holy elements to the bedsides of the sick, break at any rate the letter of this precept. But the Reformed Churches, which disallow even reservation, keep close to it.

IV. THAT NOT A BONE OF IT SHOULD BE BROKEN. This precept can only be spiritually observed, for in the Christian passover, the “flesh” to be eaten has no “bones.” But it is spiritually kept wherever communicants are warned against dividing Christ in their thoughts, against separating his humanity from his Divinity, or against practising special devotion to any separate portion of his person, as to his “Sacred Heart” or his “Five wounds.” It was the essence of one of the early forms of heresy to “divide Christ;” and on this account the Church of England protests in her second article of religion, that in him “two whole and perfect natures are joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is One Christ.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 43—51.—*The spirit of the Passover ordinance.* The features to be specified reappear in the Lord's Supper. The ordinance was—

I. EXCLUSIVE. (Vers. 43, 45, 48.) A stranger, an uncircumcised person, and a hired servant, were not to be permitted to eat of it. Their relation to Israel was wholly external. In like manner, the Lord's Supper is exclusive. It excludes the stranger to the death of Christ, the uncircumcised in heart, and those who sustain a merely legal and hireling relation to the Church. These have "neither part nor lot" in the matter.

II. YET CATHOLIC. (Vers. 48, 49.) The sojourning stranger who wished to keep the passover had only to be circumcised—he and his males—to be admitted to the ordinance. He was then to be as one born in the land. This catholicity of spirit, and kindness to foreigners, blending with a stern exclusiveness in religion, is characteristic of the whole Mosaic code. Cf. Vinet on the tolerance and intolerance of the Christian religion ("Vital Christianity"). The Lord's Supper is the most catholic of ordinances. It overleaps all barriers of race, nationality, clime, and religion. At the Lord's table there is neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.

III. EQUALISING. (Ver. 44.) The master and slave sat down at the same board. See last homily. Christianity is the great social equaliser.

IV. UNIFYING. (Vers. 46, 47.) It taught the congregation to feel its unity. 1. The lamb was to be eaten in one house. 2. Not a bone of it was to be broken. "Through the unity and integrity of the lamb given them to eat, the participants were to be joined into an undivided unity and fellowship with the Lord, who had provided them with the meal" (Keil). 3. All the congregation were to eat it. The Lord's Supper, in like manner, is a social meal, in which the Church, eating "one bread," and drinking "one cup," declares itself to be "one body" (cf. 1 Cor. x. 16, 17). "The preservation of Christ, so that not a bone was broken, had the same significance; and God ordained this that he might appear as the true Paschal Lamb, that was slain for the sins of the world."—J. O.

Vers. 43—51.—*The Law of the Passover.* I. WHAT GOD REQUIRES IN ITS OBSERVANCE. 1. God demands purity of communion. No stranger is to eat of it. (1) Our holy things are not to be profaned. The life of Christ is lowered and endangered by indiscriminate admission to the Lord's table. (2) They are not to be degraded into superstitious rites. When they are given as if salvation resided in them, we are substituting idols for the unseen Saviour. The only safeguard for purity of worship is purity of communion. 2. It is not to be carried out from the midst of the household of faith. The peace and fellowship of the Gospel are only for the circumcised in heart. 3. Communion with Christ to be characterised by reverence and holy awe: not a bone of him is to be broken. 4. Every wall of partition is removed. All who believe have a right to join in the feast (vers. 41—49); but they must come with the mark of God's people,—a circumcised heart.

II. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH IS BLESSED NOT ONLY WITH SAFETY BUT ALSO WITH DELIVERANCE. "Thus did all the children of Israel . . . and on the self-same day" they passed out of Egypt (50, 51). Fellowship with Christ is deliverance from the bondage of evil.—U.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

Vers. 1—16.—**SANCTIFICATION OF THE FIRST-BORN.** In connection with the deliverance from death of the Israelite first-born by the blood of the lamb, and still further to fix the remembrance of the historical facts in the mind of the nation, Moses was commissioned to de-

clare all the firstborn of Israel for all future time, and all the firstborn of their domesticated animals "holy to the Lord." There was, perhaps, already in the minds of men a feeling that peculiar dignity attached to the first-born in each family; and this feeling was now strengthened by the assignment to them of a sacred character. God claimed

them, and also the first-born of beasts, as His own. The clean beasts became his by sacrifice; but the unclean ones could not be similarly treated, and therefore had to be "redeemed" (verse 13) by the sacrifice of clean animals in their place. The first-born of men became at the first institution of the new ordinance God's ministers; but as this system was not intended to continue, it was announced that they too would have to be "redeemed" (verses 13, 15). The exact mode of redeeming them was left to be settled afterwards, and will be found in Num. iii. 40-51; xviii. 16.

Ver. 1.—On the true grammatical *nexus* of this verse, see note on ch. xii. 51. The injunctions of verse 2, and probably those of 8-15—were given to Moses on the very day of the setting-forth, most likely, at Succoth in the evening.

Ver. 2.—Sanctify unto me. Not by any positive ceremony, but by regarding it as "set apart unto the Lord" (verse 12)—made over to him, that is, as his own. All the first-born. The Hebrew word used is masculine, and by its proper force limits the command to the first-born *males*, who alone had been in danger from the tenth plague. Whatever openeth the womb. This clause added definiteness, showing that "first-born" did not contain any reference to any later birth, and that it applied to every case where a woman's first child was a male. It is *mine*. Or, "it shall be mine." I claim it.

Ver. 3.—And Moses said. Without relating the directions given to Moses any further, the author passes to the directions given by him. He thus, here and elsewhere, avoids unnecessary repetition. Remember this day. The injunction came with great force at the close of the first day's journey, when the good-will of the Egyptians had been shown, and the people had been helped and speeded on their way, and felt that they were actually quitting the house of their bondage, and setting out for Canaan. By strength of hand the Lord brought you out—i.e., "by His powerful protection has God brought you on your way thus far." Therefore, "Remember this day, and remember that nothing leavened is to be eaten on it" (see ch. xii. 15-20).

Ver. 4.—In the month Abib. The name of the month had not been previously mentioned. Some have derived it from the Egyptian Epiphi. As, however, *ab* means "greenness" in Hebrew, and *abib* "green ears of corn," while *ibba* meant "fruit" in Chaldee (Dan. iv. 12, 14), and *abbon* means "green herbs" in Arabic, there is no need of a foreign derivation for the word. The month

of "greenness," or of "green ears of corn," would be both appropriate and intelligible.

Ver. 5.—The land of the Canaanites, etc. Compare ch. iii. 8, 17. The six nations of these passages are reduced here to five by the omission of the Perizzites, one of the less important tribes. Which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. See Gen. xv. 18; xxiv. 7; and compare the comment on ch. vi. 8. That thou shalt keep this service. This injunction had been already given (ch. xii. 25) almost in the same words; but on the former occasion it was delivered to the elders only; now it is laid upon the whole people.

Ver. 6.—Seven days. Compare ch. xii. 15. In the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. The feast lasted during the whole of the seven days, but the first day and the last were to be kept especially holy. (See ch. xii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 6-8.)

Ver. 7.—Here again the injunctions are mere repetitions of commands already given in ch. xii. (See verses 15 and 19.) Repetition was no doubt had recourse to in order to deepen the impression.

Ver. 8.—And thou shalt shew thy son. Repeated from ch. xii. 26, 27.

Ver. 9.—And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes. There can be no doubt that the Jewish system of *tephillin*, or "phylacteries," grew mainly out of this passage, and was intended as a fulfilment of the commands contained in it. The *tephillin* were strips of parchment with passages of Scripture written upon them and deposited in small boxes, which were fastened by a strap either to the left arm, or across the forehead. The modern Jews argue that they were what Moses here intended, and that their employment began from this time. Some Christian commentators agree with them. But the great majority argue, from supposed probability and from the entire absence of any reference to the actual wearing of *tephillin* in the Old Testament, that the custom must be, comparatively speaking, a modern one. It is generally supposed to have originated, with other superstitious practices, in the time of the Babylonish captivity. Those who take this view regard the words of Moses in the present passage as merely metaphorical, and compare them with Prov. iii. 3; vi. 21; vii. 3. Kalisch, however, observes with reason, that if the injunction to write passages of the Law on the door-posts of their houses (Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20) was intended to be understood literally, and was literally carried out (Is. lvii. 8), the commands with respect to *tephillin*, which are coupled with them (Deut. vi. 8; xi. 18) must have been similarly intended. And probability, which is said to be against the Mosaic origin of *tephillin*, may perhaps

rather be urged in its favour. The Egyptian practice of wearing as amulets "forms of words written on folds of papyrus tightly rolled up and sewn in linen" (Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, vol. iii. p. 364) is well attested. Would it not be in harmony with the general character of his legislation, that Moses should adopt and regulate the custom, employing it to do honour to the Law and keep it in remembrance, without perhaps purging it wholly from superstitious ideas? Moses allowed the Israelites in many things "for the hardness of their hearts," content if he could introduce some improvement without insisting at once on an impracticable perfection. That the law of the Lord may be in thy mouth. The Israelites are instructed from the first, that the *tephillin* are to be a means to an end; and that the end is to be the retention of God's law in their recollection—"in their mouth," and therefore in their heart, since "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Ver. 10.—This ordinance. The ordinance of unleavened bread. See ch. xii. 14, 24.

Ver. 12.—Set apart. The expression is especially appropriate to the case of first-born animals, which would have to be separated off from the rest of the flock, or of the herd, and "put aside" for Jehovah, so as not to be mixed up and confounded with the other lambs, kids, and calves. The males shall be the Lord's. This limitation, implied in verse 2, is here brought prominently into notice.

Ver. 13.—Every firstling of an ass. The ass was the sole beast of burthen taken by the Israelites out of Egypt. (See Ex. xx. 17.) Neither the horse nor the camel was among their possessions in the wilderness. This is

agreeable to the Egyptian monuments, by which the camel appears to have been rare in Egypt at this time, and the horse as yet mainly used for war and by the nobles in their chariots. With a lamb. A lamb or a kid. The word used is the generic one. (See the comment on ch. xii. 3.) If thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. This enactment was evidently made to prevent a refusal to redeem. It would not require to be put in force, since by refusing under such a penalty a man would suffer pecuniary loss. All the first-born of men among thy children. Rather "among thy sons." Shalt thou redeem. Later on, the amount of the redemption money was fixed at five shekels of the sanctuary for each. (Num. iii. 47.)

Ver. 14.—When thy son asketh thee. Compare ch. xii. 26, and the comment *ad loc.*

Ver. 15.—When Pharaoh would hardly let us go. Rather, "when Pharaoh hardened himself against letting us go." At his last interview with Moses, Pharaoh had absolutely refused to let them go *with their cattle* (ch. x. 24—27), and Moses had absolutely refused to go without them. I sacrifice all that openeth the womb, being males. And being clean animals. The common sense of the reader or hearer, is expected to supply the restriction. Of my children. Rather, as in verse 13, "of my sons."

Ver. 16.—A sign . . . frontlets. See the comment on verse 9. It is the custom among the Jews to write this entire passage—Ex. xiii. 1—16—on two of the four strips of parchment contained in the *tephillin*. The others have inscribed on them Deut. vi. 4—9, and Deut. xi. 13—21

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*The Dedication and Redemption of the First-born.* In commemoration of the great mercy whereby their first-born sons were spared, when all those of the Egyptians were slain, God required the Israelites to do two things:—(1) To dedicate all their first-born sons, not only of the existing but of all future generations, to himself; and, (2) to redeem them, or buy them back for the purposes of secular life, by a money payment. It is analogous to this—

I. THAT CHRISTIAN PARENTS ARE REQUIRED TO DEDICATE, NOT THEIR FIRST-BORN SONS ONLY, BUT ALL THEIR CHILDREN, TO GOD IN BAPTISM. All have deserved death. All have been in danger of it. All have been spared by the mercy of God, on account of the atoning blood of Christ. All therefore are to be dedicated by their parents to God's service—brought to the font, and presented to him to be his faithful soldiers and servants until their life's end. All are to receive a species of consecration, whereby they become "priests to God" (Rev. i. 6), and may have boldness to approach him without the intervention of a human mediator. But all are not to be ministers. The ministry is for such as have a special call, which cannot be known in infancy, or indeed until persons are well advanced towards manhood.

II. THAT CHRISTIAN PARENTS HAVE, AFTER DEDICATING THEM, TO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN BACK, AS IT WERE, TO SECULAR LIFE. Hannah gave her son up to God from the time that she weaned him, took him to the Temple, and left him with

the priests. Christians cannot do this. Though some of their sons may ultimately have a call to the ministry, this will not be the case with all, and they must act as if it would not be the case with any. They must take their children back to their houses, give them a secular education, and prepare them in most instances for secular life. But they have not to buy them back. This arises from the difference between the two dedications, the one having been a dedication to the ministry and the other not. Christians do not need to retract the dedication of their children by any subsequent act. They may and should maintain it. Laymen may lead lives as truly sanctified as clergymen. They may serve God as well, though in a different way. They may be, and should be "holy to the Lord." Who would not desire his children to be such?

Vers. 3—16.—*The rightful use of Church ordinances.* Church ordinances are—(1) Commemorative; (2) Disciplinary; (3) Channels of supernatural grace. The benefits derivable from them depend mainly upon their rightful use. We learn from the instructions here given to the Israelites by Moses, that their rightful use consists especially—

I. IN THE REGULAR KEEPING OF THEM. "Thou shalt keep this ordinance in his season from year to year." Spasmodic observance, enthusiastic and frequent at one time, perfunctory and infrequent at another, ten times this year, once the next, will bring no blessing, conduct to no good result. Each ordinance has its own time or times—baptism and confirmation once in a lifetime—the Holy Communion weekly, if opportunity offers; if not, monthly; or, *at the least*, thrice a year—attendance at public worship, each Sunday, twice—fasting, on Fridays and in Lent—commemoration of chief festivals, once a year—and so on. Fitness has in every case been considered, and set times appointed at proper intervals. Let the rule of the Church be *regularly* followed, let there be no needless variation, no will-worship, no caprice, and the greatest benefit may be confidently anticipated. But following one's own fancy in the matter, now observing rules, now breaking them, making ourselves in fact a law to ourselves, is a course that will assuredly obtain no blessing upon it. "Thou shalt keep each ordinance in his season."

II. IN THE STRICT KEEPING OF THEM. "There shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee, in all thy quarters." Lukewarmness, double-mindedness, half-and-half measures, are everywhere condemned in Scripture. "If the Lord be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him." "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." If the ordinances of the Church are worth following at all, they are worth following *strictly*. If the Church says—"Put away gaiety and amusement during this or that season," then *all* gaiety and amusement should be put away—none should be seen "in all our quarters." If she appoints two services, or (as some understand it) three for Sundays, then men should not limit their attendance to one. If she urges frequent communions, they should attend frequently, and not be content with the minimum of three times in the year.

III. IN THE KEEPING OF SUCH OF THEM AS ARE COMMEMORATIVE WITH REMEMBRANCE. "Remember this day, in the which ye came out from Egypt"—"the Lord slew all the first-born—therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix." A large part of the ritual of every church is commemorative. Sunday is a commemoration. The Friday fast, enjoined by the Church of England and others, is a commemoration. Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, Ascension Day, are commemorations. And the Holy Communion is in part commemorative. To observe, in a certain sense, these days and seasons and ordinances, without giving serious thought to the historical events with which they are connected, and out of which they have arisen, is to lose half the benefit which their observance was intended to secure to us. It is scarcely, perhaps, to be supposed that any one could receive the Holy Communion without some thought of the death of Christ upon the Cross; but it must greatly conduce to the rite having its due and full operation on our minds and hearts, that we should vividly present to ourselves on the occasion a mental picture of the agonies suffered for us, that we should dwell in thought upon the whole scene of the trial and the crucifixion, and seek to realise its particulars. We cannot have too deeply impressed upon

is the recollection of the day on which, and the means by which, God brought the Church of the first-born out of the spiritual bondage of Egypt, saved them from the destroyer, sanctified them, and made them his "peculiar people."

IV. IN THE CONTINUED KEEPING OF THEM THROUGH TIMES OF PROSPERITY. "When the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, thou shalt keep this service." The discipline of adversity is apt to draw men nearer to God than that of prosperity. Many are very careful and regular attendants on Church ordinances when they are afflicted, or in poor circumstances, or suffering from a bereavement; but, if the world smiles upon them, if they grow rich and respected, if men court and flatter them, they grow careless and irregular in such matters. They think that they cease to have the time for them; but in reality they cease to relish them. "The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches," choke the good seed that was in them, and "they become unfruitful." They forget God, and the marvellous things that he hath done for them. Hence a warning is required. We must not let the "milk and honey" of Canaan wean our hearts from God, or make us less zealous in his service, or less constant attendants upon his ordinances. The higher we are lifted up the more we need his grace; the greater attraction that the world offers to us, the more helpful to us are those holy rites and usages, which draw our thoughts away from earthly things, and fix them upon things Divine and heavenly.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3, 11—17.—*The sanctification of the first-born.* This command has its basis in the fact that on the night when God executed his tremendous judgment against Egypt, the first-born of Israel was spared. Because this great mercy had been shown to Israel, the first-born of man and beast were ever afterwards to be reckoned as specially belonging to Jehovah. The first-born of the generation then living was his by direct purchase; all later first-borns were to be his by grateful dedication. It was required, in addition, that the first-born of man, as well as of unclean beasts, should be "redeemed." This may have been designed to teach that the lives of these later first-borns were as truly forfeited by sin as were those of the original first-born, on the night of the exodus; and that the nearer the relation in which the individual stands to God, the more pressing becomes the need for atonement.

I. REDEMPTION IS BY SUBSTITUTION. This is well illustrated by the law for the redemption of unclean animals (ver. 13; cf. Num. xviii. 15). The firstling of an ass, being unclean, could not be offered on the altar. It was, therefore, to be redeemed by the substitution of a lamb. If not thus redeemed, its neck was to be broken. This teaches the further lesson—*unredeemed life must die*. It was on the same principle that the lamb was substituted for the first-born on the night of the exodus. This law does not specify the manner of the redemption of the first-born of male children, but it was probably originally by a lamb also. The redemption was subsequently effected by a money-payment of five shekels (Num. xviii. 16). This gave prominence to the idea of a ransom, already implied in the use of the word "redeem." The principle of the redemption was still the substitution of life for life, the money-payment pointing back to the lamb or other victim of which it was the price. Jesus has fulfilled the type under both its aspects. He has redeemed us by the substitution of his holy life for our sinful ones (Heb. ix. 26—28). His life has been given as a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6).

II. REDEEMED LIFE BELONGS TO GOD (vers. 1, 12, 15). As all later generations of Israel were represented in that first one, so all later first-borns were represented in those of the night of the exodus. By redeeming them from death, God purchased the first-born of Israel in a peculiar manner to himself. What held true of the first-born, held true, in a wider sense, of the nation as a whole, and holds true now of all believers. They are God's, because God has redeemed them. We must not seem to lessen the natural claim which God has upon our service. All souls are God's; and no moral being has a right to use his powers otherwise than for the glory of him who gave them. But in a special manner Jehovah claims redeemed life for himself. "I have redeemed

thee, thou art mine" (Is. xliii. 1). "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

III. THE ANIMAL CREATION SHARES IN MAN'S RUIN AND REDEMPTION. First-born of man and beast.—J. O.

Vers. 3—11.—"*Remember this day.*" The exhortation in these verses may very well be applied to Christians. They are to remember the *fact* and the *might* of their redemption. They are to commemorate it by observance of appointed ordinances. They are to beware of forgetting it in days of prosperity. They are to show their remembrance of it by a holy walk, and by due instruction of their children.

I. REMEMBER THE FACT AND THE MIGHT OF YOUR REDEMPTION. 1. The *fact* of it (vers. 3—8). How Jesus has brought you up "out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Ps. xl. 1); has redeemed you from the law's curse, from Satan's tyranny, from a condition of wrath, and from spiritual death; has introduced you into the liberty of God's children, and started you on your journey to an everlasting and glorious inheritance. Redemption from the thralldom of Pharaoh sinks into insignificance as compared with this "so great salvation." If Israel was summoned to remember the day on which they came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, much more is it the duty of Christians to remember what great things God has done for *them*. 2. The *might* of it. "By strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place" (vers. 3, 9, 14). They were to remember this as enhancing their sense of the greatness of their redemption, and as affording a pledge that God was able to accomplish all else that he had promised (ver. 5). The might expended in the Christian redemption is not less, but greater, than in the exodus from Egypt. It does not detract from its greatness that it is chiefly *moral* strength—power exerted in overcoming evil, in producing moral effects in the minds and consciences of men, and in making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Redemption has both its objective and its subjective sides, and in both is displayed the power of God. God's might is seen in the upholding of Christ; in the victories which, while on earth, he was enabled to gain over the powers of evil; in the gigantic triumph of the Cross; and in the spiritual effects produced since, through eighteen centuries, by the preaching of his Gospel; in the regeneration of souls, in the strength given to his servants to do spiritual work, in the victory whereby they overcome the world.

II. BEWARE OF FORGETTING YOUR REDEMPTION IN THE DAYS OF YOUR PROSPERITY, ver. 15. Prosperity has a subtle influence in leading away the heart from God. When men have eaten, and are full (Deut. viii. 12—18), they are very apt to grow haughty and self-sufficient. This danger is one to be jealously watched against.

III. SHOW THAT YOU REMEMBER YOUR REDEMPTION BY DOING THE THINGS THAT GOD COMMANDS. 1. By *observing his ordinances*. The special ordinance here alluded to is the *feast of unleavened bread*—a sequel to the passover (vers. 3—10). Christians are to observe the Lord's Supper. 2. By *a holy life*. The observance of the outward ordinance would be valueless if that which it spiritually represented was lost sight of, viz., the need of a walk in "newness of life." We are to "keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7). To this end has Christ redeemed us, that we may walk in holiness (Rom. vi. 4—7; Eph. v. 25—28; Titus ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18). 3. By *instruction of children*. God lays stress on this (vers. 8—14; cf. Deut. vi. 6—9; xi. 18—22). It is his chief way of perpetuating a holy seed. The responsibility of instruction rests primarily on the parent. No task should be more delightful to him, or should be discharged more faithfully. If the parent is willing, many opportunities will present themselves. A child's curiosity is ever active. The ordinances of the Church will furnish starting-points for conversation. We have in these verses, and elsewhere in the book, specimens of the instruction that is to be given.—J. O.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The consecration of the first-born.* I. THE MEANING OF THE TYPE.

1. Man's first-born the type of the first-born of God, in his authority and priestly function among his brethren, and as the object of the father's love and trust. 2. In Egypt's and Israel's first-born we find the two-fold type of Christ and his people. Egypt's die, Israel's are saved. The death of Egypt's first-born bursts the bonds of Israel, the death of God's first-born, the bonds of his people.

II. GOD'S DEMAND. 1. His claim upon the saved life: "It is mine." (1) His right to our service. He has bought us with a great price. (2) His delight in us. We are a treasure and a joy to him. Because he loved us he gave Christ to die for us. 2. The life which Christ has redeemed is to be set apart for God (Rom. xii. 1). (1) With full purpose of heart. (2) Under the power of Christ's love: "the love of Christ constraineth us." (3) With unceasing prayer for the Spirit's indwelling.

Ver. 3—16.—How to declare God's salvation. 1. **BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS MERCIES.** 1. "Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt." (1) The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of remembrance: "Do this in remembrance of me." (2) The remembrance of deliverance extends over the Christian's whole life: "unleavened bread is eaten." 2. The celebration of the Passover awoke inquiry among those who had not witnessed God's deeds (ver. 8).—True gratitude, heartfelt thanksgiving, will make the reality of God's love to be felt by those who have not known him. (1) The place and use of the Lord's Supper in the Christian Church. (2) The power of love in the Christian life. (3) Of true praise and worship in the congregation. To make God something to others, he must first be something to ourselves.

II. BY THE DOING OF HIS WILL. The Israelites, in sacrificing or redeeming the first-born, woke again the question, "What is this?" (vers. 14, 15). Our obedience to the good and holy will of God, our consecration to his service will show the reality of his salvation and awaken in many hearts the question whence this consecration flows and the desire to share it. "Let your light so shine" (Matt. v. 16).—U.

Ver. 10. Cf. ch. xii. 42.—Remember. Utmost pains taken that the day should be honoured and remembered. (1) The month in which it occurred became the beginning of months. (2) A special ordinance as to the first-born pointed back continually to the event celebrated (vers. 11—13). (3) The annual feast was specially devised to keep it in memory (vers. 14, etc.). Why all this?

I. REASON OF OBSERVANCE. It commemorated: 1. *A great judgment.* Nine plagues had passed; the members of each successive trial following one another at shorter intervals and with increasing severity. [Illustration, siege of town. Besiegers draw parallels closer and closer, each time sounding summons to surrender. Every summons disregarded; at length word given for the assault.] God laying siege to Egypt, now preparing for the assault (cf. generally Amos iv.). "Therefore, prepare to meet thy God" (ch. xi. 4). "I will go out;" the representatives stand aside that the arm of Jehovah may be recognised. Fourteenth of month; midnight. God accompanied by the angel of vengeance. Picture result—palace, dungeon, stables, fields, temples, streets. The judgment was upon Egypt and her gods. 2. *A great deliverance.* (1) From death. God the judge is impartial. If Egypt has sinned, so also Israel. Three plagues shared by both, both now threatened by self-same danger. Israel, however, trusting God, may escape by obedience. Lamb chosen four days earlier. Slain that afternoon at sundown. Light of full moon shows blood streaks on lintels and doorposts of houses in Goshen; inside, people prepared for departure, feeding on lamb. Midnight: Is it imagination that rush and quiver of unseen wings? The shadow of the wings of God shelter each blood-stained door, whilst the angel of vengeance passes over, sparing those whom God protects. (2) From slavery. Wailing throughout Egypt. Midnight message, "Go, get ye gone." At once families gather to standards of their tribes. Soon one great army, harnessed and equipped, laden with spoils of Egypt, the Israelites march forth from the land of their captivity. The time fulfilled to the day (xii. 41), when their hour is come their God is ready. 3. *A great exhibition of Divine power.* Not a mere judgment or a mere deliverance, but judgment by a personal judge, deliverance by a personal deliverer. (1) The Egyptians needed to learn who Jehovah was. The Israelites had not done much to make him respected; rather had brought his name into disrepute as the patron of a slavish multitude. Must cause his own name to be hallowed (cf. Ezek. xxxvi. 20—23). (2) Israel needed to learn that Jehovah was the deliverer—a God faithful to his promises, yet who could not endure sin. Moses and Aaron his instruments, but the victory due only to *his* right hand and *his* holy arm.

II. USE OF THE OBSERVANCE. By communicating the judgment and the deliverance,

it was calculated to keep men mindful of the judge and the deliverer, and to prompt respect for his law (xiii. 9). Commemorations are an aid to memory, reminding of past events, and recalling associations connected with them. *Mere* observance as an end in itself, bondage (cf. Gal. iv. 9, 10); as a means to an end, helpful and necessary. The Pharisee *makes* a virtue of observance; the right thing is to *draw* virtue from it. See what this observance taught:—1. God is long-suffering, but the day of vengeance comes at length. The help to memory, as to what he *had* done, was a help to conviction as to what he *might* do. 2. God will not clear the guilty, yet his mercy doth endure for ever. Even with the help, how often were these truths forgotten (cf. Ps. cvi. 7—13, etc.); would any have remembered them without it?

Apply. Life, which forms the memory of the future, grows out of memory of the past. A good memory is a help to good living. What helps do you use to prompt memory? The marked bill, the birthday text-book, the diary—all these helpful; above all, the day, the anniversary, if we use it rightly. Commemorations are but sign-posts pointing to that which is commemorated; use them as such, follow out their indications. So, remembering past mercies, faith will be strengthened and hope sustained.—G.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 17-20.—**THE DIRECTION OF THE JOURNEY.**—The direct road from Tanis to Palestine—a road much frequented under the nineteenth dynasty—lay along the coast of the Mediterranean, and conducted to Philistia. If we look at the map, and observe the position of Tanis (now San) on the old Tanitic branch of the Nile, now nearly dried up, we shall see that the route which would naturally suggest itself to any one wishing to proceed to the Holy Land from Tanis would be one running almost due east, from Tanis to Pelusium, and from Pelusium, south of Lake Serbonis, to Rhinocolura; and thence, following the course of the coast to Gaza, Ascalon, and Ashdod, the chief towns of the Philistine country. It is true that a marsh region intervenes between Tanis and Pelusium which might seem to bar the route; but the Egyptian remains show that, in the times of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, this obstacle was surmounted by means of an embankment which was carried across it, and that a direct road thus connected the two cities.

Moses, at this point of his narrative, begins about to trace the onward march of the Israelites from Succoth to Etham, in the direction of the Red Sea, anticipated, it would seem, an objection on the part of his reader, who would naturally ask, Why was not the direct route eastward taken and Canaan entered on the south-west after some half-dozen marches? In verses 17, 18, he gives the reply—1. God led them, they did

not determine their own route; and 2, God would not lead them by the direct route, because it would have conducted them to the Philistine country, and the Philistines were strong, and would have resisted the invasion by force of arms. Hence it was that the southern or south-eastern route was taken in preference to the northern one—and that the second stage in the journey was from Succoth to Etham (verse 20).

Ver. 17.—Although that was near. Rather “because it was near” (ὅτι γὰρ ἤν, LXX.)—i.e., “God did not, because it was near, lead them this way, but a longer one.” Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war. The Philistines were a powerful and warlike race half a century after this, in the time of Joshua, and were masters of the five important cities of Gaza, Ascalon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, which seem to have formed a confederacy (Josh. xiii. 3). It would appear that their strength was already considerable, and that the Israelites, though perhaps more numerous, were in capable of coping with them, being wholly unaccustomed to war. The Israelites were therefore not allowed to take this route, which would have brought upon them at once a severe trial, and might have led to their voluntary return into Egypt.

Ver. 18.—God led the people about. Or “led the people a circuit,” i.e., made them take a circuitous route to Canaan, the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea—i.e., by the southern wilderness, or what is now called “the wilderness of Sinai.” Kalisch shows the wisdom of this course—how it gave time for the nation to be “gradually accustomed to fatigues and hardships by a long and

tiresome march in the desert"—to learn obedience to their chief—and finally to be "trained to military discipline and martial virtue by occasional expeditions against the weaker tribes of the desert." He errs, however, in ascribing the wisdom of the course taken to Moses, since Moses expressly declares that the conception was not his, but God's. And the children of Israel went up harnessed. The word here translated "harnessed," is generally thought to mean either "with their loins girded" (Onkelos, Kimchi, Kalisch) or "in military order" (Gesenius, Lee, Knobel). Ewald, who inclines to the latter of these two senses, suggests that, strictly, it means "in five divisions"—viz., van, centre, two wings, and rearguard. The word is, apparently, a derivative from *khamesh*, "five."

Ver. 19.—Moses took the bones of Joseph—i.e., his body, which had been embalmed, and deposited in a mummy case (Gen. i. 26), most probably at Tanis, which was the capital of the Shepherd kings, no less than of Menephthah. He had straitly sworn the children of Israel. See Gen. i. 25. Joseph, firmly believing in the promise of God to

give Canaan to the descendants of Abraham had made them swear to take his body with them when they left Egypt. The desire to be laid in their native earth was common to most of the nations of antiquity, and, in the case of the Israelites, was intensified by Canaan being the "land of promise." Jacob had had the same feeling as Joseph, and had been buried by Joseph in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. i. 13).

Ver. 20.—And they took their journey from Succoth and encamped in Etham. On the probable position of Etham, see the "Introduction" to this book. The word probably means "House of Tum," and implies the existence at the place of a temple of the Sun-God, who was commonly worshipped as Tum or Atum. The name, therefore, is nearly equivalent to Pithom (ch. i. 11), which means "City of Tum;" but it is not likely that Moses designated the same place by two distinct appellations. The site of Etham, moreover, does not agree with that of the Patumos of Herodotus (ii. 158), which is generally allowed to be Pithom.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 18—21.—*It is the method of the Divine action to accomplish ends by circuitous means.* God "led the Israelites about." Instead of conducting them straight from Tanis to Canaan in the course of six or seven days, he carried them down nearly to the furthest point of the Sinaitic peninsula, at least two hundred miles out of the direct line of route. He afterwards made them occupy in desert wanderings the space of forty years, and brought them into Canaan on the side furthest from Egypt—that which fronted the east. So it is—

I. IN GOD'S NATURAL WORKINGS. To make a planet suitable for the habitation of man, he does not create one fit for him straight off. He prepares an extended mass of matter which gradually condenses, throws off an atmosphere, settles into land and sea, undergoes for many thousands of years a series of aqueous and igneous changes, deposits strata, elevates them into mountains, works out river courses, raises and submerges continents; and only after a number of millennia does he, by this long and tedious process, effect the end aimed at from the first, the construction of a habitation suitable for such a being as man. Again, he will have man live on bread; but he does not make bread. He makes a germ capable of developing into a plant, of throwing out roots and leaves, deriving sustenance from air and earth and showers, increasing gradually for several months, and finally throwing up the tall spike, which after growing, and swelling, and ripening, bears ultimately the golden grain that is suited to be man's food.

II. IN GOD'S SPIRITUAL WORKINGS. If God has a work for a man to do, if for this a certain character is required, God again pursues no compendious method. The man is born in a certain sphere, given certain powers, and then it is left for the circumstances of life to work out in him, under Divine superintendence, the character required. Moses is trained for eighty years in order to qualify him for his position as deliverer of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt; and is only rendered fit to accomplish the task by what befalls him in that long period. All the saints of God, raised up to do any great work, have had some such long training. Even Christ did not enter on his ministry at once, but remained in obscurity for thirty years, before asserting his mission.

III. EVEN IN GOD'S MIRACULOUS WORKINGS. Christ would assuage the pains of

hunger of the five thousand. He does not simply, as he might have done, remove them by a word. He obtains such food as there is at hand: he blesses and breaks; he causes the multitude to sit down; he distributes the food among the apostles, and bids them distribute to the multitude. If the Red Sea is to be parted, an east wind is made to blow for some hours; if a blind man is to be cured, clay is taken, and mixed with spittle, and put upon the blind man's eyes, and by a circuitous method his cure is effected. All this seems strange to us because we are so impatient. Our life here endures so short a space, and we so little realise the fact of the life to come, that we are always in a hurry to obtain results, and are annoyed at having to wait for them. But an Eternal Being can afford to be patient. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The question with God is never as to the quickest, but always as to the best method. Haste is proverbially unsafe. "Most haste, worst speed," says the adage. It would bring much improvement into human life, if there were less of bustle and hurry in it—if men were not in so much haste to be rich—if they did not expect to reap the harvest so soon as they have sown the seed—if they would allow time for plans to take effect, for improvements to be brought to perfection, for institutions to take root and grow.

Ver. 19.—*It is a Christian duty to carry with us on the path of life the bones of our dead.* Joseph had sworn the Israelites to carry his bones with them out of Egypt at their departure; and they were thus in a special way bound to do it. But, apart from any such oath, or any positive wish expressed, it would have been well for them to have taken him with them. We are intimately bound up with the men of the generation before our own, and cannot too carefully carry along with us their memory. Men may be considered to carry their dead with them on their course through life—

I. WHEN THEY BEAR IN MIND AND HAVE RESPECT TO THEIR FATHERS IN THE FAITH, ESPECIALLY THOSE NEAR TO THEM IN TIME. It is almost impossible to measure adequately the amount of our debt to those who have immediately preceded us in life—who have set us an example of a consistent Christian course—and shown us its possibility. What living Christian man does not feel that to some other Christian man, older than himself, still alive or else passed away, he is indebted for the impetus which changed his path in life, turned him from the dumb idols which he was following, and led him to the worship of the living God? What gratitude is not due in each such case! Such memories are to be cherished, clung to—not relinquished, because he to whom we owe so much is dead. Being dead, such an one "still speaketh;" and it is well that our hearts should still hear his voice, and be thankful for it.

II. WHEN THEY CHERISH THE MEMORY OF THE FRIENDS AND RELATIONS WHOM THEY HAVE LOST. It is too common a practice, with men especially, to shut out the memory of the deceased. Bereavement is so terrible a thing, so poignant a grief, that to spare themselves men mostly make a sort of resolve that they will not think upon their dead. And it is quite possible, after a while, so to turn from the thought as to make it both transient and rare. But the better course—the true Christian course—is to retain our dead in our thoughts. The recollection can do us nothing but good. It is sobering, chastening, yet elevating. It is apt to wean us from the world; to soften us; to draw us into communion with the unseen; to help our higher nature in its struggle with the lower.

III. WHEN THEY BEAR IN REMEMBRANCE THE WORST SINS THAT THEY HAVE COMMITTED. The most terrible death to which we poor human creatures are subject is that "body of death," which we bear about with us in our flesh, and under which we "groan, being burdened"—viz. sin. There are persons who succeed in putting away the memory of their past sins, and who are as gay and light-hearted as if there were nothing against them in God's book. But it is a wiser course to bear about with us always this "death" also, and not seek to hush it up or put it out of sight. The thought of our past sins is well calculated to make us humble, penitent, forgiving; to save us from presumption, and make us throw ourselves absolutely for justification on the merits and atoning blood of Christ.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 17—21.—“*The way of the wilderness by the Red Sea.*” The direct road to Canaan lay through the land of the Philistines. God, however, did not lead the people by this way, but round by the Red Sea. “For God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt” (vers. 17). Another reason was that he designed to make his covenant with them, and give them laws, in the solitude of the “mountain of God” (ch. iii. 12).

I. REDEEMED FROM EGYPT, THE PEOPLE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO LINGER ON ITS BORDERS. What snatches of repose are granted, are only meant as a preparation for resumption of the journey on the morrow. Their destination was Canaan. To this they must press forward. A rest of eleven months (at Sinai) will be granted afterwards, meanwhile, on the borders of Egypt, they must pause no longer than is absolutely necessary. At the beginning of the Christian life, delays, pauses, lookings back, are peculiarly dangerous. Egypt is too near. Return to it is too convenient. The pursuer will gain too easy an advantage. There must be no pausing till we are fairly out of the enemy's territory. Succoth to Etham, Etham to Pi-hahiroth (ch. xiv. 2).

II. IT RESTS WITH GOD TO DETERMINE THE WAY BY WHICH HIS PEOPLE SHALL BE LED. “When Pharaoh had let the people go, God led them not,” etc. (vers. 17). 1. It was the privilege of the Israelites that *they had God as their guide*. His pillar of cloud and fire went before them (vers. 21, 22). What wiser or safer guide could any one desire? 2. *God's guidance was authoritative*. Not only were the Israelites not left to pick out the way for themselves, but whither God directed, thither they were bound to go. They were not permitted to take any route they pleased. They were God's people, and must walk by his law. 3. *God's guidance was frequently mysterious*. They would often be perplexed to understand the reasons of it. A reason seems to have been given here, but otherwise the route chosen must have seemed a very strange one. The believer is often thus led by a way he knows not (Is. xlii. 16).

III. GOD CONSULTS FOR HIS PEOPLE'S GOOD IN THE WAYS BY WHICH HE LEADS THEM. “For God said, peradventure,” etc. (ver. 17). Consider here, 1. *God's procedure*. (1) He turned the Israelites aside from the road which naturally they would have followed. The way of the land of the Philistines was no doubt the road by which they *expected* to be led. It was the customary road. It lay straight before them. It was the shortest and most direct. How often does God thus turn us aside in Providence from what might seem to be the natural, as, without a thought to the contrary, it may have been the anticipated course of our lives? The road that lies straight before us is not the one in which we are permitted to walk. Even in Christian work, by what zigzag ways are we sometimes conducted to our ends! (2) He led the Israelites by a long detour into the wilderness. If the end was to escape the Philistines, God did not allow the Israelites to suppose that he intended to pamper and indulge them. The wilderness was a worse place to travel in than “the way of the land of the Philistines.” They would have to encounter many trials. A heavy strain would be put upon their faith. Though exempted from war at the beginning, they had to fight enemies on the way, and ultimately were marched up to the borders of Canaan, to undertake, at another point, the work of invasion. In like manner, the Christian curriculum is not an easy one. Whoever enters upon the Christian journey, expecting to find it all sunshine and roses, is doomed to sorrowful disappointment. The road, under God's guidance, soon takes a turn, which leads into the wilderness of trial. 2. *The reasons of God's procedure*. (1) The direct way was at that time an *impassable* one. The Israelites, just escaped from Egypt, were not in a condition to force their way through the strongly defended territory of the Philistines. The difficulty, it is true, lay in *them*—in their want of faith, courage, and power of obedience, not in God, whose help was all-sufficient. But practically, the direct road was closed against them. So, in God's merciful guidance of his people, the path is sometimes bent aside, because no other is for the time practicable. Obstacles to their progress, insurmountable by them at that stage of their knowledge and experience, block up the road which seems more direct, and to be allowed to advance in it would be no kindness. (2) The direct road was *fraught with danger* for themselves. Their strength and faith were not equal to the opposition they would encounter. It

would have proved too much for them. They must be allowed time to gather experience, to throw off the habits of their servitude, to be brought under discipline for war, to acquire steadiness and courage in facing an enemy. Led up against the Philistines in their present undisciplined condition, they would have fled at the first onset, and would have clamoured, even more vehemently than they did in the desert (ch. xiv. 12), to be conducted back to Egypt. And does not this in large measure explain the mysterious turnings and windings in our own lives? God, who knows our frame, understands perfectly what degree of severity in temptation we are able to endure, and he mercifully orders our course, so that we may not be tempted above that we are able (1 Cor. x. 13). We pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matt. vi. 13), and this is one way in which the prayer is answered. Another way is by preventing or restraining the temptation. But where, as in the present case, it is a temptation which, so to speak, belongs essentially to the situation—which we *must* encounter, if that path is to be travelled at all, then is there no way of avoiding it but by being led in a different road. Especially in the *beginning* of a Christian course may we expect these sudden turnings of our path. We are not then in a condition to encounter *very* powerful enemies, to endure *very* fierce temptations, and by taking us a little way about God shields us from them. (3) There was a *discipline* to be gained in the circuitous route by which they were led. God's design, in sparing his people the battle with the Philistines, was not, as we have seen, to indulge and spoil them. The place whither he conducted them was the wilderness, and there he purposed to subject them to a severe moral training. The end of this training was simply to bring them up to the standard which as yet they had not reached, to develop in them the qualities in which they were as yet deficient, to impart to them, in short, that hardihood and strength of character and will which *would* enable them to cope with Philistines, or any other foes. The end God has in view in our own trials is precisely the same.

IV. OUR WISDOM, UNDER ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIVES, IS TO RESIGN OURSELVES TO GOD'S LEADING, BELIEVING IT TO BE ALWAYS THE BEST FOR US. We cannot err in resigning ourselves to the guidance of one omniscient, wise, loving, and supremely good.—J. O.

Ver. 19.—*Joseph's bones*. A promise, and most of all a promise to the dead, is to be regarded as sacred. Amidst the haste of their departure the Israelites did not forget to take with them the bones of Joseph. They probably carried away also the bones of the other patriarchs (Acts vii. 16). In this touching incident, see—

I. FAITH'S ANTICIPATIONS VERIFIED. Joseph had said, "God will surely visit you" (Gen. i. 25). He had died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off (Heb. xi. 13—22). At the time of Joseph's death the tokens were scant that Israel would grow to be so great a people, and would be led forth, many thousands strong, to go to Canaan. Joseph's faith rested on God's naked word. God had said that this time would come, and it did. We are never wrong in depending on the Divine promise. Those who trust it, however the world may ridicule them as devout enthusiasts, will prove to be right in the long run. Events will verify their confidence. Apply, *e.g.*, to the ultimate triumph of Christianity.

II. FAITH'S CHOICE GIVEN EFFECT TO. He had strictly sworn the children of Israel, saying, "Ye shall surely carry up my bones away hence with you." Notwithstanding the splendour of his position in Egypt, Joseph's heart was still with his own people. To his clear moral vision, the godless character of the Egyptian civilisation was sufficiently apparent. The Hebrews were as yet but a handful of shepherds; but he discerned in them a spiritual greatness which was wanting to Egypt, and he had faith in the magnificent future which God's Word pledged to them. So he was not ashamed to call the humble settlers in Goshen his brethren, and to declare that he preferred a grave with them to the proudest mausoleum that Egypt could erect for him. He left a charge that when they departed, they were to take his bones with them, and lay them in Canaan, as subsequently they did (Josh. xxiv. 22). He thus anticipated Moses in choosing the better part, and in preferring union with God's people to all the treasures and renown of the land of his adoption. We act in the same spirit when we set the things which are "unseen and eternal" before those which are "seen and temporal," and count it our highest honour to be enrolled among "God's children."

III. A HINT OF THE RESURRECTION. Whence this care of Joseph for the bestowal of his bones? What matters it—it may be asked—where the dust is laid, if only the spirit is secure? In one way it matters very little, though affection naturally inspires the wish to sleep beside one's kindred. There may have been more than this. The care of the body in Egypt was, as we now know, connected with a hope of its revival. And there are good grounds for believing that the same hope had to do with this command of Joseph, and with the loving care shown by the patriarchs generally in the bestowal of their dead. (See the point discussed in Fairbairn's *Typology*, vol. i. p. 355, *et seq.*). The believer's body is a sacred deposit. Destined to share with the soul in the glory yet to be revealed, there is a fitness in treating it with reverence, and in laying it in a place consecrated to the Christian dead.—J. O.

Vers. 17—22.—*Israel's journey the emblem of the Christian's pilgrimage.* I. GOD'S TENDER CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE. 1. Trials and temptations are proportioned to their ability to bear them. "He led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines." The conflict with these was not too much for his strength, but it was too much for Israel's faith. They would have made shipwreck at the very outset. He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond that we are able to bear. 2. It "was near;" but the shortest way to our possession may not be the surest. God's love is more fully displayed in leading us seemingly away from what we desire than it would be in at once leading us to it. 3. His purpose in delay. God leads us by the way of the wilderness where, by the knowledge of ourselves and of him we may be prepared for the earthly and the heavenly portion he designs to give us.

II. THEY BORE WITH THEM A PROOF OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (ver. 19). 1. The time might have been when the hope expressed by those unburied bones seemed vanity and folly, but not now. These relics touched a million hearts, and reminded them how gloriously God had redeemed his word. 2. We carry with us mementoes which fill us with strong assurance for the future. The very light we now possess tells how God fulfils his promises. Human hearts believed God of old when he said that the Sun of Righteousness would arise, and human lips declared the hope. The past fulfilments of prophecy lay broad foundations for our trust that every word will in like manner be redeemed.

III. THEY HAD GOD HIMSELF FOR GUIDE. 1. We have the indwelling of the Spirit and of Christ. We cannot mistake the way if we follow him who goes before us. 2. The light of his presence is brighter in the night of trial. When all else is veiled from sight, the light of that gracious presence beams out in fullest splendour. 3. There must be the following by day to have the consolation of the glory by night. Are we following in the footsteps of Jesus? Is he Saviour as well as sacrifice to us?—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 21, 22.—THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD AND OF FIRE. Having stated, in verse 17, that "God led the Israelites," and determined their route for them, the writer here proceeds to explain how this leading was accomplished. With extreme simplicity and directness he states, that the conduct was effected by means of an appearance, which in the daytime was like a column or pillar of smoke ascending from earth to heaven, and in the night was like a pillar of fire. He considers the presence of God to have been in the pillar, which moved in front of the host, and showed them the way that they were to go. When it halted, they halted; when it advanced,

they advanced. Their journeys being made as much in the night-time as in the day, on account of the intense heat, the pillar took in the night the appearance of a column of fire, so as to be equally visible as by day. All attempts to give a rational explanation of the phenomenon are misplaced, since the writer, from whom alone we derive our information on the subject, clearly regarded it as miraculous; and both here and elsewhere (ch. xiv. 19, 20, 24; xxxiii. 9; Num. xii. 5; xiv. 11) speaks of it as a form under which God was pleased to show himself. There is little doubt that fire and smoke signals were already used by commanders of armies for

much the same purpose as that which God now accomplished in this way. The Egyptian documents of the period contain indications of the usage; and it is found among the Arabians, the Greeks, and the Persians. (See especially Q. Curt. *Vit. Alex.* v. 2; "Perticam, quæ undique conspici posset, supra prætorium statuit, ex qua signum eminebat pariter omnibus conspicuum: observabatur ignis noctu, fumus interdiu.") The miracle was thus, in a certain sense, founded upon an existing custom, with the difference that God here gave the signals miraculously, which were wont to be given in a natural way by the human leaders of armies. He thus constituted himself the general of the host.

Ver. 21.—*The Lord went before them.* From Succoth at any rate; perhaps even on the journey from Rameses to Succoth. In a pillar of cloud. The pillar was seen—the

presence of Jehovah, though unseen, was believed to be in it, and to move it. To go by day and night. Or, "so that they might march both by day and by night." Night marches are generally preferred by Orientals on account of the great heat of the days. The night-marches of the Israelites are again mentioned in Num. ix. 21.

Ver. 22.—*He took not away.* The last distinct mention of the cloud is in Num. xvi. 42, after the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. There is perhaps a later allusion to it in Num. xx. 6. In Nehemiah it is said that "the pillar of the cloud departed not from them," so long as they were in the wilderness (Neh. ix. 19); and the same is implied, though not formally stated, in Num. ix. 15-23. There is no mention of the pillar of the cloud as still with the Israelites in the Book of Joshua. Probably it was last seen on the journey from Beth-jesimoth to Abel-Shittim in the rich Jordan valley (Num. xxxiii. 49).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 21, 22.—*God's guidance of his people.* The Israelites had quitted Egypt, had broken off from their old life, were about to plunge into that wild waste of sand and rock which separates Africa from Asia by an almost impassable barrier. If they took the northern line of march, they would come upon the sandy desert. Before them would stretch "endless sands yielding nothing but small stunted shrubs—broad plains—newly reared hills—valleys dug out by the last week's storm; the hills, and the valleys, and the plains, all sand, sand, sand, still sand, and only sand, and sand, and sand again." (Kinglake, *Lothian*, p. 187.) If they turned southward, they would find themselves in a labyrinth of twisted wadys, amid huge mountains, and in a region consisting chiefly of bare granite and sandstone rocks—"the Alps unclothed." (Henneker, *Notes during a Visit to Egypt*, p. 214.) In either case they would sorely need God's guidance; and God's guidance was vouchsafed to them. So it is with Christians.

I. CHRISTIANS HAVE THE GUIDANCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT THROUGH ALL THE INTRICACIES AND DESERT PLAINS OF LIFE. The Lord leads them. God himself, God the Holy Ghost, co-equal Person with the Father and the Son in the Triune Godhead, is their guide and director, "a light to their feet and a lantern to their paths." Most necessary to them such direction. Just escaped from Egypt, just freed from the bondage of sin, how would they wander and go astray, unless his right hand were stretched out to help and guide! On the weary waste, the dry, bare, monotonous plain of an eventless life, where no sign showed the way, where hope would fail and the heart grow faint, what could they do but for him? In the labyrinth of conflicting duties and uncertain devious paths, how could they determine on their course but for him? Alike in both he leads, directs, guides. He "will not leave them nor forsake them."

II. THE GUIDANCE IS PERPETUAL BOTH BY NIGHT AND DAY. "Lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world" was the promise given us by our Lord. There is no part of life from which he withdraws himself—not the darkest night of earthly misery and disappointment—not the brightest day of worldly success and glory. And in both alike he is needed—perhaps most needed in the day. Then men think they can walk by themselves, choose their own course, direct their own paths. Then consequently they are most apt to go wrong, and "wander out of the way in the wilderness." But he is ever at hand to restrain, correct, recover them. By internal or external checks, by feeling and conscience on the one hand, by his word, his ordinances, his ministers on the other, he interposes to save men from themselves, to keep them in the right way, or lead them back into the right way if they have departed from it,

Darkness does not hide us from him—darkness does not separate us from him—yea, “the darkness is no darkness with him—the night and the day with him are both alike.”

III. THE GUIDANCE IS VARIED TO SUIT THE DIFFERENT NEEDS OF THE SOUL. Now by cloud and darkness, an overshadowing of the soul by his felt but unseen presence; now by the flashing in of intolerable light into the secret recesses of the heart and conscience, does the Holy Spirit of God direct and rule our lives. None can limit him as to the means which he shall employ. Now he discomfits our foes, directing his keen gaze upon them “through the pillar of fire and of the cloud” (Ex. xiv. 24); now he simply separates between our foes and us by interposing an insurmountable barrier (*ib.* ver. 19); at one time he shines into our hearts with a mild, gentle, and steady radiance; at another, he gives us rest, as under the shadow of a cloudy canopy. At all times he chooses the means most fit to accomplish his ends, shrinking from none that are potent to effect his gracious purposes. Clouds and darkness would seem to be the things most opposite to the ineffable brightness of his most glorious nature; but even clouds and darkness are pressed into his service, and made his ministers, when they can be ministers of good.

IV. THE GUIDANCE CONTINUES UNTIL THEY REACH THE PROMISED LAND. “The pillar of the cloud departed not” from the Israelites “by day, neither the pillar of fire by night,” during the whole time of their long and weary journeying, until they reached Canaan. God’s gifts are “without repentance.” They are given for the whole period during which we need them. As the Israelites required guidance until they trod the soil of the Jordan vale, and Canaan’s hills lay plainly in sight, so do Christians need the Spirit’s gentle leading, until the whole wilderness of this life is past, and the true Canaan reached. And what they need, they have. The Spirit’s aid is with them to the end.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The fiery-cloudy pillar.* The visible pillar is no longer beheld, but God’s fiery-cloudy presence still attends the Church in her wanderings, and confers upon her benefits analogous to those enjoyed by the ancient people. God’s presence, as manifested in the pillar of cloud and fire, was—

1. HOLY.—1. *God is holy.* Holiness is the principle which guards the distinction between the Creator and the creature. It eternally excludes everything evil and impure from the Divine nature (Martensen). It is the “zeal of the Lord of Hosts” for his own honour, and for the maintenance of the interests of truth, purity, and righteousness. The fire in the cloud was a symbol of it. 2. *It is as the Holy One that God dwells in his Church.* “The Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee” (Is. xii. 6). Holiness, accordingly, becomes those who would serve him (Ps. xciii. 5). 3. *The privilege is great, but perilous.* (1) Sin leads to the withdrawal of God’s presence. When Israel sinned in the matter of the golden calf, God withdrew beyond the precincts of the camp. The cloudy pillar removed to a distance (ch. xxxiii. 7—10). (2) Rebellion provokes God to anger. On more than one occasion fire came out from the midst of the pillar and destroyed the rebels (Lev. x. 2; Num. xvi. 22; xvii. 10). “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. xii. 29). Holiness turned against sin is wrath. God tempers the vision of his holiness, which otherwise would be unendurable to man, by shrouding it in the cloud.

II. ENLIGHTENING. “A pillar of fire to give them light.” God’s presence in his Church is illuminating. 1. *Whence the light shines.* The light shines in the Word, in Divine providence, and in the teaching of the Spirit which illuminates both. 2. *What the light does.* It shows us spiritual truth. It reveals duty. It guides (see below). It cheers in the night of affliction. 3. *Light with attendant mystery.* The light is in the cloud. At best, we know but “in part” (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Even revealed truth has its side of mystery.

III. SHELTERING. The allusion in Isa. iv. 6 would suggest that the cloud spread itself over the camp in the daytime, and so formed a canopy or shadow from the heat. God’s presence is a grateful shelter to his people. They feel the need of it when temptations fiercely assail, or when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the Word

"In the time of trouble shall he hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me" (Ps. xxvii. 5).

IV. GUIDING. The pillar went before the camp of Israel "to lead them the way" (cf. Deut. i. 33). The cloud pointed the way in the daytime, the fire by night. The Church and the individual believer are similarly guided. He who seeks to know the will of God will not fail of direction. Providence opens the road. The light that streams from the Word shows the path of duty. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way: walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and to the left" (Is. xxx. 21).

V. ADAPTIVE. The pillar adapted itself to the circumstances of the people. In the daytime, when the sky was light, it took the form of cloud; in the night season, it shone as bright fire. Now it moved in front as a guiding beacon; again, it was spread as a grateful awning over the camp; at another time, it went behind, intercepting the enemy (ch. xiv. 19). Thus does God vary the aspects of his presence and the modes of his help with unfailing adaptation to the special needs of his people. He is the All-sufficient.

VI. HOSTILE TO THE ENEMY.—He intercepts their pursuit; he hides his people from their fury; he makes their way dark to them; he frowns upon them, and discomfits them (ch. xiv. 19—26).—J. O.

Vers. 17—22. *Fire and cloud.* "And the Lord went before them," etc. (Ex. xiii. 21). Israel might have been in Canaan within ten days. Reason why not is given xiii. 17. This however, not a reason for the forty years wandering: but only for the circuitous route by the desert of Sinai. The line of Israel's march for the first two days is soon given. They start from *Rameses*, capital of Goshen, a store city, recently built by the Hebrews, the king there possibly. The first stage was *Succoth* ("tents") perhaps a caravan station or military camp—a journey of about fifteen miles. Another fifteen miles to *Etham* on the edge of the desert. There roads, canals, now all to be left behind; just there and then appeared the FIRE AND CLOUD.

I. ITS NATURE. Point out the three leading theories, especially as the two earlier mentioned lead up to the third and the true. The phenomenon was: 1. *Common natural fire.* Seen as fire by night, as smoke by day. Perhaps the sacrificial fire of Israel preserved from primitive times. An ordinary caravan fire. Or such as was borne at the head of the Persian armies. 2. The same, but *glorified by association with a religious idea*; viz., that God was in reality the Guide of his people, and that that was well represented by the fire at the head of the hosts. 3. *Altogether supernatural.* God saw the need of Israel at that moment, and met it in his own superb manner. [For full discussion of Ritualistic explanations, see Kurtz, vol. ii. 344—348, Eng. ed.] The phenomenon was a trinity in unity. It was *one*, not two, not one kind of pillar by night and another by day. It consisted of *cloud*, of *fire* (electric?) in the cloud, and of *Jehovah* in both (xiii. 21; xiv. 24). The last doubtless a manifestation of the "Angel-God" of the Old Testament.

II. FORMS AND MOVEMENTS. 1. *Forms.* (1) Usually a *pillar* (xiii. 21). (2) A *wall*, see xiv. 19, 20. Must have been a wall in this case, of perhaps more than a mile in length. A wall of cloud to Egypt, hiding the moon, the sea, and the advanced movements of the armies of Israel. When the cloud lifted, Israel was gone. On the other side, a mile or more of, as it were, electric fire, adding to the moon-illumination by which Israel passed through the sea. (3) A *roof or an awning*. See Num. x. 34; Ps. cv. 39; 1 Cor. x. 1, 2; and the very beautiful passage, Is. iv. 5, 6. 2. *Movements.* (1) Usually *stationary*—on the tabernacle—on the mercy-seat—sometimes filling the tabernacle, so that none could enter to minister. (2) *Lifting*, when Israel advanced. (3) *Descending*, when Israel was to rest.

III. SIGNIFICANCE. Israel could not have seen the fire-cloud for forty years without catching much of the meaning; but we more. The fire-cloud teaches that the Lord Jesus is: 1. *Ever in and with the Church.* The glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud. 2. *In two-fold glory*; in the fire of holiness; in the cloud of mercy that tempers the blaze. He so appears to the individual soul—to the family—to the Church—to the nation—to the wider world. Note the special outbreaks from the cloud at certain sinful crises in Israel's history. 3. *The leader of our pilgrimage.* See C. Wesley's

hymn, in Wesley's *Collection*, 326. Yet some scope, then as now, seems to have been left for the play of intelligence (Num. x. 31). 4. *Captain in our holy war.* On Egyptian monuments generals are represented as flames, streaming in darkness, at the head of armies. See the hymn beginning: "Forward be our watchword."

"Burns the fiery pillar
At our army's head;
Who shall dream of shrinking,
By our Captain led?"

5. *Our wall of defence.* 6. *Our canopy for comfort.* 7. Whose interpositions are ever marked by wondrous *timeliness*. It was on the "edge of the wilderness" that the fire-cloud first appeared; and after the desert journey, seems to have disappeared, save as it may have been represented by the Shechinah above the mercy seat, which assured unwonted splendour at the dedication of the first temple.—R.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1—4.—THE DIRECTION OF THE JOURNEY CHANGED. Hitherto the march of the Israelites had been to the south-east. Another day's journey in this direction would have taken them beyond the limits of Egypt, into the desert region east of the Bitter Lakes, which was dry, treeless, and waterless. In this tract there would have been but scant nourishment for their flocks and herds, and absolutely no water for themselves, unless it had been obtained by miracle. God therefore changed the direction of their route from south-east to due south, and made them take a course by which they placed the Bitter Lakes on their left hand, and so remained within the limits of Egypt, in a district fairly well watered, but shut off from the wilderness by the Bitter Lakes and the northern prolongation of the Gulf of Suez, with which they were connected. This route suited the immediate convenience of the host; and, having no suspicion of any hostile movement on the part of the Egyptians, they—not unnaturally—made no objection to it. It had, however, the disadvantage, in case of a hostile movement, of shutting them in between their assaults on the one hand, and the sea upon the other; and this circumstance seems to have led Pharaoh to make his pursuit.

Ver. 2.—Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn. Kalisch translates "return"—i. e., "retrace their steps," and supposes that Etham lay far south of Pihahiroth, on the west coast of the Gulf of Suez. But the Hebrew word means either "turn back"

or "turn aside," and is translated here *ἀποστρέψαντες* and not *ἀναστρέψαντες* by the LXX. Dr. Brugsch supposes that the turn made was to the north, and the "sea" reached the Mediterranean; but all other writers, regarding the sea spoken of as the Red Sea (compare ch. xiii. 18), believe the divergence from the previous route to have been towards the south, and place Pihahiroth, Migdol, and Baal-Zephon in this quarter. Pihahiroth. The exact position is unknown. Neither the Egyptian remains nor the writings of the Greeks or Romans present us with any similar geographic name. If Semitic, the word should mean "the entrance to the caves," but it is quite possible that it may be Egyptian. Migdol. There was undoubtedly a famous Migdol, or Maktal, on the eastern frontier of Egypt, which was a strong fortified post, and which is often mentioned. Hecatæus called it Magdolos (Fr. 282). In the Itinerary of Antonine it is said to be twelve Roman miles from Pelusium (p. 76). But this is too northern a position for the Migdol of the present passage; which must represent a "tower" or "fortified post" not very remote from the modern Suez. Over against Baal-Zephon. The accumulation of names, otherwise unknown to the sacred writers, is a strong indication of the familiarity possessed by the author of Exodus with the geography of the country. No late writer could have ventured on such local details. A name resembling "Baal-Zephon" is said to occur in the Egyptian monuments. Dr. Brugsch reads it as "Baal-Zapuna." He regards it as the designation of a Phœnician god, and compares "Baal-Zebub." Others have compared the "Zephon" with the Græco-Egyptian form "Typhon," and have supposed "Baal-Zephon" to be equivalent to "Baal-Set" or "Baal-Sutech"—a personification of the principle of evil.

Ver. 3.—They are entangled in the land,

Or "they are confused," "perplexed"—*f. e.* "they have lost their way." Pharaoh could not conceive that they would have taken the route to the west of the Bitter Lakes, which conducted to no tolerable territory, unless they were hopelessly at sea with respect to the geography of the country. In this "perplexity" of theirs he thought he saw his own opportunity. The wilderness hath shut them in. Pharaoh is thinking of his own "wilderness," the desert country between the

Nile valley and the Red Sea. This desert, he says, "blocks their way, and shuts them in"—they cannot escape if he follows in their steps, for they will have the sea on one hand, the desert on the other, and in their front, while he himself presses upon their rear.

Ver. 4.—I will be honoured See the comment on ch. ix. 16. That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. Compare above, ch. vii. 5

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-4. *God's trials of His faithful ones.* All hitherto had gone well with the departing Israelites. The Egyptians indeed had "thrust them out"—had hurried their departure—had felt insecure till they were beyond the borders. But they had freely given of their treasures to speed the parting guests, and had in every way facilitated their setting forth. The multitude, vast as it was, had in no respect suffered as yet; it had proceeded in good military order (ch. xiii. 18), had found abundant pasture for its flocks and herds, and was now on the very verge of the desert which alone separated it from Canaan. Egypt was behind them; freedom and safety were in front; no foe forbade their entrance into the vast expanse which met their gaze as they looked eastward, stretching away to the distant horizon of hot haze, behind which lay the Promised Land. The question, how they were to support themselves in the desert had not perhaps occurred to them as yet. They had come out provisioned with bread for a certain number of days, and probably with many sacks of grain laden upon their asses. If the spring rains had been heavy, as is likely to have been the case, since in Egypt there had been both rain and hail (ch. ix. 23-33), the desert itself would have been covered at this season with a thin coat of verdure and "thickly jewelled with bright and fragrant flowers" (*Eothen*, p. 180). The hearts of many were, no doubt, bounding at the thought of quite quitting Egypt at last, and entering on the absolute freedom of the illimitable desert. But at this point God interposed. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn, and encamp before Pihahiroth." Egypt is not yet to be quitted; they are still to skirt it—to remain among Egyptian cities—to turn away from Palestine—to interpose a sea between themselves and Asia—to pursue a route which leads into one of the most unproductive portions of the whole African continent. Sore must the trial have been to those who had knowledge of the localities—dark and inscrutable must have seemed the ways of Providence. What was the Almighty intending? How could Canaan ever be reached if they turned their backs on it? Whither was God taking them? Even apart from any pursuit by Pharaoh, the situation must have been perplexing in the extreme, and must have severely exercised the more thoughtful. What then must not the universal feeling have been, when it appeared that the monarch, informed of their movements, had started in pursuit? What but that they were God-forsaken—or, worse, led by God himself into a trap from which there was no escape? Readily intelligible is the bitterness which showed itself in their address to Moses—"Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us?" And so God's people—his faithful and elect children—at all times and under all circumstances, are subject to severe trials. These come upon them either—

I. FOR THEIR MORAL IMPROVEMENT. "The trial of our faith worketh patience," and God wills that "patience should have her perfect work," that his saints may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James i. 3, 4). "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Difficulties, dangers, temptations, perplexities, disappointments, constitute a moral discipline which is to most men absolutely needful for the due training and elevation of their moral characters. By such trials the dross is purged away from them—the pure metal remains. Their love of God and trust in God are tested, and by being tested strengthened. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh

not ashamed." The man who is perfect in each good word and work has in almost every case passed through a furnace of affliction to attain his perfection.

II. FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. God's glory is often shown forth in the sight of men most conspicuously by the trials of his faithful ones. In Israel's case this was brought about by miracle. But the rule holds good in the ordinary course of human affairs equally. What has so shown forth the glory of God in the past as the endurance of trials, insults, torments, death, by his martyrs? What even now so impresses men with the reality of religion, as suffering on account of the truth? Afflictions, crosses, disappointments, patiently borne, not only strengthen our own spirits, but are a witness for God in a world that for the most part disregards him, and to a considerable extent "get him honour."

III. FROM THE NECESSITY OF THE CASE, BECAUSE GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT AS OUR WAYS. If the children of Israel could have foreseen that God would divide the Red Sea for them and lead them through it, the route southwards to the point of crossing would have been seen to be the fittest and best, securing as it did the continuance of water and of forage, and avoiding one of the worst parts of the wilderness. But it was impossible for them to surmise this; and hence their perplexity, alarm, and anger against Moses. In our ordinary trials it often happens that our inability to understand how we are being dealt with lies at the root of our sufferings. The disappointment which most vexes us may be a necessary preliminary to the success of which we have no thought. The "thorn in the flesh" may bring us to a higher moral condition than we should have reached without it. "God's ways are in the deep, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." He deals with us as he sees to be best, and we cannot see that so it is best. He has surprises in reserve for us, sometimes as little looked for as the division of the Red Sea by the Israelites. Hence, if in cases of this kind we would suffer less, we must trust God more; we must give ourselves wholly up to him, place ourselves in his hands, accept whatever he sends as assuredly, whether we can see it or not, what is fittest for us.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1-5.—*The command to encamp by the sea.* These verses introduce the narrative of what the Lord "did in the Red Sea" (Num. xxi. 14), when his people "passed through . . . as by dry land; which the Egyptians, assaying to do, were drowned" (Heb. xi. 29). This crossing of the Red Sea was no after-thought. God had it in view when he turned aside the path of the children of Israel from the direct route, and ordered them to encamp before Pi-hahiroth, near the northern end of the gulf. His design in this event was to give a new and signal display of his Jehovah attributes, in the destruction of Pharaoh's host (ver. 4), and in working a great salvation for his Church. By the events of the Red Sea, he would be shown to be at once a God of mercy and judgment (Is. xxx. 18); Supreme Ruler in heaven and in earth (Ps. cxxxv. 6); disposing events, great and small, according to his good pleasure, and for the glory of his name, making even the wrath of man instrumental to the accomplishment of his purposes (Ps. lxxvi. 10). Consider—

I. THE MYSTERIOUS TURN IN THE ROUTE. The command was to turn to the south, and encamp between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon (ver. 2). This route was—1. Not necessarily an *arbitrary* one. We need not suppose that God brought the Israelites into this perplexity—shutting them up between the sea and the mountains, simply for the purpose of showing how easily he could again extricate them. The choice of routes was not great. (1) The way of the Philistines was blocked (ch. xiii. 17). (2) The way by the north of the Red Sea—between it and the Bitter Lakes—probably did not then exist. The Red Sea seems at that time to have extended much further north than it does at present. (3) To go round by the *upper* end of the Lakes would have been to take the host far out of its way, besides exposing it to the risk of collision with outlying tribes. (4) The remaining alternative was to march southwards, and ford the Red Sea. The route was, nevertheless—2. A *mysterious and perplexing* one. Pharaoh at once pronounced it a strategic blunder (ver. 3). Supposing the intention to be to cross the Red Sea, no one could hazard a conjecture as to

how this was to be accomplished. Ordinary fords were out of the question for so vast a multitude. Hemmed in by the mountains, with an impassable stretch of water in front, and no way of escape from an enemy bearing down upon them from behind, the Egyptian king might well judge their situation to be a hopeless one. Yet how strangely like the straits of life into which God's people are sometimes led by following faithfully the guiding pillar of their duty; or into which, irrespective of their choice, God's providence sometimes brings them! Observe, further, 3. *No hint was given of how the difficulty was to be solved.* This is God's way. Thus does he test his people's faith, and form them to habits of obedience. He does not show them everything at once. Light is given for present duty, but for nothing beyond. Fain would we know, when difficulties crowd upon us, how our path is to be opened; but this God does not reveal. He would have us leave the future to him, and think only of the duty of the moment. Time enough, when the first command has been obeyed, to say what is to be done next. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7).

II. **GOD'S ENDS IN LEADING THEM BY THIS ROUTE.** God *had* ends. He was not guiding the children of Israel blindly. His knowledge, his purpose, no less than his presence, go before his saints, as guiding pillars, to prepare places for them. God had a definite purpose, not only in leading the people by this route, but in planting them down at this particular spot—between Migdol and the sea. His ends embraced—1. *The humiliation of Pharaoh.* That unhappy monarch was still hard in heart. He was torn with vain regrets at having let the people go. He had a disposition to pursue them. God would permit him to gratify that disposition. He would so arrange his providence as even to seem to invite him to do it. He would lure him into the snare he had prepared for him, and so would complete the judgment which the iniquity of Pharaoh and of his servants had moved him to visit upon Egypt. This was God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (ver. 4). Note (1) If God is not honoured *by* men, he will be honoured *upon* them (Scott). (2) Retributive providence frequently acts by snaring men through the evil of their own hearts. Situations are prepared for them in which they fall a prey to the evil principles or dispositions which, in spite of warnings and of their own better knowledge, they have persisted in cherishing. They wish for something, and the opportunity is presented to them of gratifying their wish. They harbour an evil disposition (say lust, or dishonesty), when suddenly they find themselves in a situation in which, like a wild beast leaping from its covert, their evil nature springs out upon them and devours them. It was in this way that God spread his net for Pharaoh, and brought upon him "swift destruction." 2. *The education of Israel.* The extremity of peril through which Israel was permitted to pass—coupled with the sudden and marvellous deliverance which so unexpectedly turned their "shadow of death into the morning" (Amos v. 8), filling their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing (Ps. cxxvi. 1)—while their pursuers were overwhelmed in the Red Sea, was fitted to leave a profound and lasting impression on their minds. It taught them (1) That all creatures and agencies are at God's disposal, and that his resources for the help of his Church, and for the discomfiture of his enemies, are absolutely unlimited. As said of Christ, "even the winds and the sea obey him" (Matt. viii. 27). (2) That the Lord knoweth, not only "how to deliver the godly out of temptations," but also how "to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. ii. 9). It was thus (3) A rebuke to distrust, and a powerful encouragement to faith. 3. *The complete separation of Israel as a people to himself.* Paul says—"all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. x. 2). Connect this with the spiritual significance of baptism. Baptism, especially as administered by immersion, figures dying to sin, and rising again to righteousness (Rom. vi. 4). It is thus the analogue of the passage through the Red Sea, which was a symbolic death and resurrection of the hosts of Israel. By saving the people from the waves which engulfed their enemies, Jehovah had, as it were, purchased the nation a second time for himself, giving them "life from the dead." The baptism of the sea was thus a sort of "outward and visible sign" of the final termination of the connection with Egypt. Its waters were thereafter "a silver streak" between the Israelites and the land of their former bondage, telling of a pursuer from whom they had been delivered, and of a new life on which they had entered.—J. O.

Vers. 1—12.—*Israel stricken with terror by reason of a deliverance not yet completed.* It is plain that the Israelites, going out of Egypt in such circumstances as they did, must have gone out in a state of great exhilaration, almost beside themselves with joy at such a complete reversal of all their past experiences at the hands of Pharaoh. Moreover we are assured in ch. xiv. 8 that they went out with a high hand. The power of God for the deliverance of Israel was manifested in great fulness. What he had done in the past, and especially in the recent past, if only well considered and kept in the mind, was sufficient to inspire trust, banish fear, and show the wisdom of most diligent obedience to every direction that he gave. Nevertheless in verse 10 we find this humiliating statement, "they were sore afraid"—sore afraid, so soon after deliverance, and such a deliverance! Whence could their danger have come, and what could have made them so quickly to forget their God? These are the matters we have now to consider.

I. CONSIDER WHAT THERE WAS TO EXPLAIN THE LOCAL POSITION WHICH PRODUCED THEIR FEAR. They were in an awkward and dangerous position from an ordinary point of view. That position cannot be more forcibly indicated than in the words of Pharaoh himself. "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." They were going into a *cul-de-sac*. Before them lay the sea; on either hand, as we imagine, rose high ground; it only needed that Pharaoh should come in at the rear and close them up altogether, when they would be compelled to surrender. How then had they come into this position? It was not through any ignorance or carelessness on the part of their leader. Any general leading an army into such a trap would have been deservedly put to death for gross incompetency. It was God who had brought them exactly here, and if the word "trap" is to be mentioned, it was a trap with regard to Pharaoh and not with regard to Israel. The God who had led the Israelites out with a high hand, led them on with the pillar of cloud, and led them into the very position which, if they themselves had been consulted, was the last they would have chosen. It was not the only way God could have taken them, but it was the way in which, *most effectually, speedily, and impressively, he could deliver them from Pharaoh.* For God, of course, well knew that the deliverance of his people was not accomplished, simply because they had got out of Egypt. The exodus had been a miracle in many ways, and not least in this, that it had compelled Pharaoh and his servants to act in contradiction to all the most dominating elements of their character. Just as afterwards in dealing with the waters of the Red Sea, God made the force of the wind to overcome the force of gravity; so he had already by another east wind, in the shape of the death of the first-born, completely set aside for a night all the most settled habits of Egypt. These habits had stood up on the right hand and on the left, and made a broad and open way for Israel to go out of the land. But presently, immediately and according to the natural order, these habits resumed their former sway. What else was to be expected? It mattered not in what direction Israel took their flight. Pharaoh and his hosts, smarting with injured pride, panting for vengeance and recovery of lost treasure, would be after them. There was a void in Egypt because of the death of the first-born, but after all the mothers would feel that void the most. There was another void by reason of the loss of all these slaves, these useful labourers, these accumulators of Egyptian wealth, and this void, we may be sure, was more operative in the vexation it produced than the loss of the first-born. It is a humiliating truth, but men, as a rule, can more easily bear the loss of kindred, even one so dear as the first-born, than the loss of fortune. A failure in business is more discomposing and fretting than a dozen bereavements, considered simply as bereavements; and thus it is certain that Pharaoh and his generals were very speedily in council as to the best way of securing the fugitives. While so engaged, the news comes to them of the direction in which the Israelites had gone. This news was the very thing to decide Pharaoh and make his preparations large and overwhelming, especially when God came to harden his heart to a greater pitch of stubbornness than it yet had reached. Either recapture or destruction seemed now certain. Therefore, seeing Pharaoh was now bound by the very force of the passions raging in his heart and the hearts of his people to follow Israel, it was well as soon as possible, to remove all danger to Israel consequent on this line of action. No good purpose was to be served either towards Israel or towards Pharaoh himself, by allowing him for any length of time, to harass their rear.

A catastrophe of the Red Sea magnitude had to come, and the sooner it now came, the better. Israel had dangers enough in front and within; from Amalekites, Amorites, Canaanites, and all the rest of their opponents; from their own character, their own depravity, blindness of heart, sensuality, and idolatrous disposition. *God does not allow all possible dangers to come upon us at once.* Do not let us be so occupied, with the dangers that are present and pressing as to forget those which he has utterly swept out of the way, overwhelmed in a Red Sea, whence they will emerge against us no more for ever.

II. CONSIDER WHAT THERE WAS TO EXCUSE AND EXPLAIN THE FEAR WHICH ISRAEL EXPRESSED. In itself this fear was indefensible. There was no ground for it in the nature of things. God had done nothing to produce fear; everything indeed, if only it could be rightly seen, to produce the contrary; everything to call forth the utmost reverence and obedience from every right-minded Israelite. He was *now*, even while the Israelites were entangled in the land, Jehovah as much as ever, the great I Am, leading Israel by a way which, though they knew it not, was the best way. But we must also look at things from Israel's point of view; we must really remember what God really remembers, that men are dust, and that even when they have the greatest reasons for confidence, those reasons get hidden up, or even presented in such forbidding aspects as to make them powerful in producing unbelief. Our great adversary, who can make evil appear good also makes good appear evil. Look then at what there was in the state of things, to excuse the Israelites in being sore afraid. 1. *The magnitude of Pharaoh's preparations.* In spite of all the crippling effects of the plague, he was able to muster a great array. Doubtless he had a big standing army, for chariots are not got ready at a moment's notice. We may infer that he was a man who always had on hand some scheme of ambition and aggrandisement, and because the Israelites had long dwelt in his land, they knew all about the skill, valour and crushing force of the charioteers. Whatever strength there might be in the natural resources of Egypt they knew it well. When the unknown Canaan had to be faced, they gave Moses no rest, till spies were despatched to report on the land; but they needed no report of Egypt. The military strength of Pharaoh was only too deeply impressed on every mind. 2. *There was the exasperation of a great loss.* The people not only knew the strength with which Pharaoh came, but the spirit in which he came. He had lost 600,000 men, with their flocks and herds, and all the choice spoils of Egypt, in the way of gold, silver and raiment. Then there was a further loss of population in the mixed multitude. There was everything to exasperate the despot, and not one thing to soothe his pride or lessen his calamities. If only he had failed in trying to get hold of a new possession, it would not have been so hard. But he had failed in keeping the old; he had gone through ten plagues, and yet lost his treasures after all. We may fear that only too many among the Israelites, had just that spirit of greed and grasping in their own hearts which would enable them to appreciate the spirit of Pharaoh's pursuit. 3. *There was the degrading effect of the long oppression in which the Israelites had been kept.* The spirit of the slave comes out in the way they talk. These are not imaginary words put in their lips; the very "*touch of nature*" is in them. These are the language and conduct that reveal a real experience. The present generation, and one knows not how many generations before, had been born in servitude. They had not only been in servitude, but they had felt and acknowledged the bitter misery of it. And now the servitude was ended in due course. Freedom was a necessity, a blessing, and a glory to Israel; but they could not be made fit for it all at once. Jehovah could show signs and wonders in many ways; he could by one blow slay the first-born of Egypt and let the oppressed go free; but it required an altogether different power and method to infuse into the liberated the spirit and courage of freemen.—Y.

Vers. 1—9.—*Trial and Judgment.* I. GOD LEADS INTO TRIAL, BUT ASSURES OF VICTORY. 1. The command to turn and shut themselves in between the wilderness and the sea. God leads us where troubles will assail us. Jesus was driven of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (1) It proves us, and reveals needs which otherwise we might not have suspected. Our weaknesses are manifested. (2) It reveals God. Through experiences of help his glory brightens for us. 2. The circumstances of God's people are taken advantage of by their foes. Pharaoh imagined his

time had now come. Earthly foes may strike at such a time; Satan surely will. 3. The result will be God's triumph over the foe, not the foe's over us.

II. THE WICKED CANNOT BE SAVED BY JUDGMENTS. 1. Terrors are soon forgotten. Repression of evil is not conversion. So soon as the repressive force ceases, evil reasserts its sway. 2. Justice done through fear only is regretted, not rejoiced in, by the doer. "Why have we done this," etc.? "As the dog returneth to his vomit." 3. Past lessons are forgotten. Pharaoh might have asked what armies could do against the God of Israel; yet he assembles his forces, never dreaming that they are only marshalled for destruction. Those who have known only the discipline of terror have not found salvation. They have only heard a cry to flee and seek salvation. To linger upon the way is to allow evil to overtake them and lead them again into captivity.—U.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 5—9.—THE PURSUIT OF ISRAEL BY THE EGYPTIANS. A short respite from suffering was sufficient to enable Pharaoh to recover from his extreme alarm. No further deaths had followed on the destruction of the first-born; and he might think no further danger was to be apprehended. The worst of Moses' threats had been accomplished — perhaps Jehovah had no more arrows in his quiver. At any rate, as he realised to himself what it would be to lose altogether the services of so vast a body of slaves, many of them highly skilled in different arts, he more and more regretted the permission which he had given. Under these circumstances intelligence was brought him of the change which the Israelites had made in their route, and the dangerous position into which they had brought themselves. Upon this he resolved to start in pursuit, with such troops as he could hastily muster. As his chariots were six hundred, we may presume that his footmen were at least 100,000, all trained and disciplined soldiers, accustomed to warfare. The timid horde of escaped slaves, unused to war, though it might be five or six times as numerous as his host, was not likely to resist it. Pharaoh no doubt expected an unconditional surrender on the part of the Israelites, as soon as they saw his forces.

Ver. 5.—It was told the King of Egypt that the people fled. Pharaoh, when he let the Israelites go, must have felt tolerably certain that they would not voluntarily return. Formally, however, he had only consented to their going a three days' journey into the wilderness (ch. xii. 31). When, being at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness, they did not enter it, but marched southward to Pi-hahiroth, the Egyptians might naturally report that instead of sacrificing, they were flying—hasting forwards—

placing as much distance as they could between themselves and the Egyptian headquarters. But this report alone would scarcely have moved Pharaoh to action. It was in the accompanying circumstances, in the particular line of route, that he thought to find his opportunity. The people "were entangled" (ver. 3). They might be taken at a disadvantage, and might be reduced to choosing between starvation and a return to Egypt. The heart of Pharaoh, and of his servants, was turned against the people. The reaction of feeling was not confined to Pharaoh. His subjects participated in it. The loss of such a large body of labourers would be generally felt as a severe blow to the prosperity of the nation. It would affect all classes. The poor labourers might be benefited; but the employers of labour are the influential classes, and they would be injured. So "Pharaoh's servants" were of one mind with their master, and they "turned against" the Israelites. Why have we done this? In the retrospect, the afflictions which they had suffered did not seem so very great. They at any rate had survived them, and were not perhaps even seriously impoverished. Royal favour will find a way of making up any losses which court minions have suffered, out of the general taxation of the country. But in prospect, the loss of 600,000 (more or less skilled) labourers appeared a terrible thing. The official class was quite ready to make a strenuous effort to avert the loss.

Ver. 6.—He made ready his chariot. The Egyptian monarchs, from the time of the eighteenth dynasty, always went out to war in a chariot. The chariots were, like the Greek and the Assyrian, open behind, and consisted of a semicircular standing-board of wood, from which rose in a graceful curve the *antyx* or rim to the height of about two feet and a half above the standing-board. The chariot had two wheels and a pole, and was drawn by two horses. It ordinarily contained two men only, the warrior and the charioteer.

Ver. 7.—Six hundred chosen chariots. Diodorus Siculus assigns to one Egyptian

king a force of 27,000 chariots (i. 54, § 4), which however is probably beyond the truth. But the 1200 assigned to Shishak (2 Ch. xii. 3) may well be regarded as historical; and the great kings of the nineteenth dynasty would possess at least an equal number. The "six hundred *chosen* chariots" set in motion on this occasion probably constituted a division of the royal body-guard (Herod. ii. 168). The remaining force would be collected from the neighbouring cities of Northern Egypt, as Memphis, Heliopolis, Bubastis, Pithoum, and Pelusium. Captains over every one of them. Rather, "Captains over the whole of them." So the LXX. the Vulgate and Syriac version. Some, however, understand "warriors in each of them" (Gesenius. Rödiger, Kalisch).

Ver. 8.—The Children of Israel went out with a high hand—*i.e.*, boldly and confidently, not as fugitives, but as men in the exercise of their just rights—perhaps with a certain amount of ostentation.

Ver. 9.—All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh. Rather, "all the chariot horses."

There is no "and" in the original. His horsemen. Rather "his riders," or "mounted men"—*i.e.*, those who rode in the chariots. That the Egyptians had a powerful cavalry at a later date appears from 2 Chron. xii. 3; but the Hebrew text of Exodus, in remarkable accordance with the native monuments of the time, represents the army of this Pharaoh as composed of two descriptions of troops only—a chariot and an infantry force. (See Hengstenberg, *Aegypten und Mose*, pp. 127-9). Overtook them. It is uncertain how long the Israelites remained encamped at Pi-hahiroth. They would wait so long as the pillar of the cloud did not move (Num. ix. 18-20). It must have taken Pharaoh a day to hear of their march from Etham, at least another day to collect his troops, and three or four days to effect the march from Tanis to Pi-hahiroth. The Jewish tradition that the Red Sea was crossed on the night of the 21st of Nisan (Abib) is therefore, conceivably, a true one.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—The good resolutions of the worldly are short-lived. By a long series of judgments, culminating in the destruction of all the first-born both of man and beast throughout his whole territory, Pharaoh had been brought down from his original hardness and pride, had acknowledged God's hand, and allowed the Israelites to take their departure. He had even besought them to ask that God would bestow upon him his blessing (ch. xii. 32). But a short time sufficed to change all his good resolutions. The more he reflected on it, the more grievous did it seem to him to lose the services of above half a million of industrious labourers. The further they became removed, the less terrible did God's judgments appear. He had lost one son; but probably he had many others; and time, as it passed, brought consolation. He had quailed before Moses; but now, in Moses' absence, he felt himself a king again, and could not bear to think that he had been made to yield. His state of mind was one ripe for revolt and reaction, when intelligence reached him which brought matters to a crisis. The report that he received seemed to show complete geographical ignorance on the part of the Hebrews, together with "a cessation of the special providence and guidance which their God had hitherto manifested in their favour" (Kalisch). Upon this his "heart was turned," he cast his former good resolutions to the winds, and made up his mind either to detain the Israelites or to destroy them (ch. xv. 9). In all this Pharaoh's conduct is but an example of the general law, that "the good resolutions of the worldly are short-lived." They are so, because:—

I. THEY ARE NOT GROUNDED ON ANY WISH TO DO RIGHT, BUT ON VIEWS OF PRESENT EXPEDIENCY. The immediate effect of the tenth plague was an impression, common no doubt to Pharaoh with the other Egyptians, such as found vent in the words, "We be all dead men" (ch. xii. 33). They were intensely alarmed for their own safety. This and this alone produced the resolution to let Israel go. It was better to lose the services of even six hundred thousand labourers than to lose their own lives. Expediency was their rule and guide. But expediency changes—or at any rate men's views of it change. Were their lives really in danger? Had they not been over-hasty in assuming this? Or, if there had been danger, was it not now over? Might it not be really expedient to arrest the march of the Israelites, to detain them, and once more have them for slaves?

II. THEY ARE THE EFFECT OF IMPULSE RATHER THAN OF PRINCIPLE. Resolutions made upon principle can scarcely change, for they are grounded upon that which is

the most fixed and settled thing in human nature. But resolutions based upon impulse are necessarily uncertain and unstable, for there is nothing so variable as impulse. All men have from time to time both good and bad impulses. Impulse exhausts itself from its very vehemence, and can never be counted on as a permanent force. It is here to-day, and gone to-morrow. No reliance can be placed upon it.

III. THEY ARE MADE MERELY BY A MAN TO HIMSELF, NOT MADE TO GOD. When the worldly man says, "I am resolved what to do," he means no more than this: "Under present circumstances, I have come to the conclusion that I will act in this or that way." He does not mean to bind himself, or, if he does, he soon finds that he cannot bind himself. There must be two parties to an obligation or engagement. If we wish our resolutions to be binding, and so lasting, we must make them solemnly, with prayer, in the sight of God, and to God. It is neglecting this which causes so many good resolutions to be broken, so many vows violated, so many pledges taken fruitlessly. Let men be sure, before they make a solemn resolution or a vow, that it is a right one to make, and then let them make the engagement, not to themselves only, or to their erring fellow-mortals, but to the Almighty.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5—10.—*The pursuit* "It was told the King of Egypt that the people fled," etc. Consider:—

I. THE MOTIVES OF THE PURSUIT. The motives were various. 1. *Pharaoh had already repented of having let the people go* (ver. 5). Their departure was a sore humiliation to him. Wounded pride was aggravated by the sense of material loss. "As serfs and bondagers, the Israelites were invaluable, and to let them go was to annihilate the half of Egypt's industry" (Hamilton). Pharaoh and his servants, accordingly, were ready to adopt any plan which promised them revenge. 2. *Pharaoh found an excuse for pursuit, in the allegation that the Israelites had "fled."* Fugitives, in the ordinary sense of the expression, the Israelites were not. Pharaoh having to the last refused to let them go to hold the required feast in the wilderness, God had taken the matter into his own hands, and had given them their freedom. The only sense in which they were "fleeing" was, that, fearing treachery, they were making all the haste they could to get beyond Pharaoh's reach. They had left Egypt, unfettered by any stipulation to return. Return, indeed, after what had happened, was out of the question. When Pharaoh and his people thrust the Hebrews out from their midst (chs. xi. 8; xii. 31—34), they neither desired nor expected to see their faces more. But now that the king had changed his mind, and wished them back again, it suited him to represent their withdrawal into the solitary regions by the Red Sea as a "flight"—a breach of good faith. God had forced him to relax his grasp, and while his hand was open, the nation had escaped, like a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler. As reasonably might the fowler complain that, the bird, thus escaped, does not voluntarily return to its old quarters. 3. *The determining motive of the pursuit was the new that Israel was "entangled in the land."* This decided Pharaoh. Almost would it seem to him as if, by permitting the escaped people to make this huge blunder in their movements, their Deity designed to give them back to his hand. As Saul said of David—"God hath delivered him into mine hand, for he is shut up, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars" (1 Sam. xxiii. 7).

II. ITS FORMIDABLE CHARACTER. Probably a pursuit of escaped slaves was never organised with greater chances of success. 1. *The expedition was popular.* "The heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people" (ver. 5). Court sentiment is not always a reliable index to the feelings of the commonalty; but it is probable that the movement to pursue Israel commanded a wide measure of popular support. The griefs and humiliations they had sustained would fill the Egyptians with hatred of the Israelitish name, and would make them willing co-partners in any scheme to inflict injury on the fugitives. They also, by this time, would be beginning to realise how great a loss, financially and industrially, they had sustained, by the withdrawal of so vast a body of labourers. 2. *The whole available military force of Egypt*

was called into requisition. "All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army" (ver. 9). Pharaoh, at the head of this glorious cavalcade, amidst this sheen of weapons, must have felt himself a greater man, and would wonder anew how he could have been so befooled as to let his slaves depart. And little, truly, to all human appearance, would Israel, unpractised in the use of arms, be able to accomplish against this disciplined and splendidly-equipped host. Pharaoh doubtless thought he had the people *this time* securely in his grasp. It was no longer the unarmed Pharaoh of the palace that Moses had to deal with; but Pharaoh, at the head of the thousands of Egypt, with chariots, and horses, and men of war; and who was that God that would be able to deliver him out of his hand? Alas for Pharaoh, and his "pomp and circumstance of war!" It was soon to be seen what short work God can make on the earth of the proudest of his assailants, showing strength with his arm, and scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts (Luke i. 51; cf. Is. xxxi. 3). 3. *The situation of the Israelites seemed to make them an easy prey.* They were "entangled in the land" (ver. 3). This was the mainstay of Pharaoh's hopes. Israel could do nothing to resist him. Penned up like sheep for the slaughter, they could neither fight nor flee. Success was certain.

III. ITS SPIRITUAL LESSON. It will readily be felt that in this pursuit of Israel by Pharaoh, we have an image—from the typical character of the history, an *intended* image—of a not uncommon experience of the Christian life. 1. *We are liable to be pursued by the evil from which we thought we had escaped.* Whoever thinks to find it otherwise will live to be disappointed. Conversion—even though one has been led into Christian liberty with "an high hand" (ver. 8)—is not the end of spiritual conflicts. We do not escape from the power of evil without many an attempt being made on the part of the enemies of the soul to reassert their dominion over us. We have a Pharaoh in the evil of our own hearts, who, after we have left his service, will not fail to pursue us. Another such Pharaoh we have in the world—old companions, etc. A third is the evil One himself, who lets no soul slip from his grasp, without many an attempt to recover it. This goes on to some extent throughout the whole life. Pharaoh's pursuit may be viewed as gathering up all these separate pursuits into a single picture. 2. *This experience is usually most acute and perilous shortly after conversion.* Naturally, after the first breaking of the soul with sin, there comes, at a little distance, a time of recoil and reaction. Passions formerly indulged, surge back upon the heart with something of the old fury. We thought we had got rid of them; but they return, pursuing us with a vehemence which reminds us of Pharaoh's chariots and horses, and fills us with dismay. Old habits, we thought we had broken with them for ever; but they are back again, struggling for the mastery. The world tries all its arts to regain its former hold. Temptations come in floods. This is the time which tests the reality of conversion, and practically decides whether God is to have us, or Satan. It is the old experience of Israel, entangled in the land, and pursued by Pharaoh: if we gain the victory, we shall probably see our enemies no more, or only in greatly weakened, in semi-ghostlike forms. 3. *The destruction of Pharaoh's host is the pledge of similar victories to the Church and to the individual in like crises of their history.* It involves the promise that what God did for Israel here, he will do for us also, if we rely upon his help, every time we are spiritually tempted. Beyond this, it pledges and foreshadows the ultimate and complete defeat of all the enemies of the Church, and of the individual soul—even to that "last enemy that shall be destroyed," which is death (1 Cor. xv. 26). The victory, like the pursuit, is gathered up typically into a single picture, though in actual spiritual history it is spread over lifetimes and ages. It must, however, be sorrowfully admitted that in individual cases, type and reality too often fall asunder. Who has not to mourn partial victories gained over him by the pursuing Pharaohs of the soul—victories oftentimes almost amounting to the dragging of us back to bondage? And what extensive victories have frequently been gained by evil over sections of the Church—victories which seem the very antithesis of this glorious Red Sea deliverance? These, however, are but ebbings in a tide, which on the whole is on the flow, and they do not touch the lesson of this incident. The pledge given in Pharaoh's destruction, God will not fail to fulfil to those who seek his aid; and as to the final victory, that is secure, beyond all power of man to prevent it.—J. O.

Ver. 8.—*Jehovah hardening Pharaoh's heart.* I. NOTICE THE EMPHASIS WITH WHICH THIS FACT IS STATED. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is mentioned, not in one place only, but in many. If it were mentioned in one place only, it might be in some doubtful way, such as would excuse us for passing it over without much examination. But being mentioned so many times, we dare not leave it on one side as something to lie in necessary obscurity, meanwhile consoling ourselves that the obscurity is unimportant. The statement meets us in the very midst of the way of Jehovah's judgments on Pharaoh, and we must meet it in return with a resolution to understand it as far as believers in Jehovah may be able to do. Notice, then, exactly, how often the statement is repeated. Jehovah says to Moses, or ever he leaves Midian, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall not let the people go" (ch. iv. 21). Again, just as Jehovah's dealings with Pharaoh were beginning, he says: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt" (ch. vii. 3). After the rod was changed to a serpent his heart was still hardened (ch. vii. 13). Nor was there yet any change after the waters were turned to blood (ch. vii. 22). He yielded a little when the frogs came, but as soon as they vanished and there was respite, he hardened his heart once more (ch. viii. 15). When the magicians confessed the finger of God in the gnats, his heart remained the same (ch. viii. 19). The flies were taken away, and "he hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go" (ch. viii. 32). In ch. ix. 12 we have an express statement that the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh. After the visitation of the hail there seems to have been a complete surrender; but as soon as it ceases the hardening returns (ch. ix. 35); and so the references continue down to the end (ch. x. 1, 20, 27; xi. 10; xiv. 4, 8, 17). Making these references, we are led to notice also the variety of expressions used. Sometimes it is simply said that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, sometimes that Pharaoh hardened it, sometimes that God hardened it; and once or twice the expression rises to the emphasis of the first person, and Jehovah himself says "I will harden Pharaoh's heart."

II. NOTICE THE CONSEQUENT OBLIGATION TO MAKE DEVOUT AND REVERENT INQUIRY INTO THIS MATTER.—There is no way to escape from the feeling that Jehovah did actually harden Pharaoh's heart. We must treat the hardening of his heart as a great fact just as Moses did the burning bush; not doubting at all that it did happen, but rather asking how and why it happened. We must turn aside and see this great sign, why Jehovah exercised such a fearful power over Pharaoh that the end of it was the destruction of his host in the waters of the Red Sea. It is a commonplace of speech to say that the expression here is one of the most difficult in all the Scriptures. It is also a commonplace of action to shake the head with what is meant for pious submission to an impenetrable mystery. But what if this be only an indolent and most censurable avoidance of earnest thought on the ways of God towards men? No one will pretend that the mystery of this expression is penetrable to all its depths; but so far as it is penetrable we are bound to explore. How are we really to know that a thing is unfathomable, until we make an attempt to fathom it? A devout Israelite, although excluded from the Holy of Holies, did not make that a reason for neglecting the temple altogether. Our duty then is to inquire what this hardening of the heart may be, in what sense it is reconcilable with the goodness and righteousness of God. One reason why this statement is put so prominently forward in one of the most prominent narratives of Scripture, and therefore one of the most prominent in all history, may be this, that we should be kept from wrong conclusions on man's agency as a responsible being; conclusions dishonouring to God and perilous to ourselves. Is it not a great deal gained if only this narrative sets people thinking, so as to deliver them from the snares of fatalism?

III. Whatever view we take of this statement must evidently be IN THE LIGHT OF ALL WE ARE PERMITTED TO KNOW CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF JEHOVAH. In considering all difficult statements as to the Divine dealings, we must start with certain postulates as to the Divine character. Before we can say that God does a thing we must know that the thing done is not out of harmony with the rest of his ascertained doings. There may be plenty of evidence as to the thing done, when there is very little evidence as to the doer. That the streams of Egypt were actually turned to blood was a thing that could be certified by the senses of every one who inspected those streams. But that God wrought this strange work could only be made sure by asking, first, what

evidence there was of God's presence, and next, what consistency there was with his acknowledged dealings. It is only too plain that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, that he became ever more settled in his resolution to keep hold of Israel as long as he could. But when we are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, then we must at once bring to mind all that we have heard of God in the Scriptures. We must take back into our inspection of those distant times all we know of his character whom Jesus revealed; for the loving Father of our Saviour is the same with the great Jehovah. The same holy personality is at work in the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life, as in the God who hardened Pharaoh's heart. We must not tolerate any conception of the hardening which contradicts the Divine character. Any view of this expression which does not harmonise with the revelation of God in the New Testament is therefore condemned. There is certainly no word in the Old Testament that more needs to be looked at in the light of the New than this. We must then dismiss from our minds any sort of notion that in hardening Pharaoh's heart, God dulled his moral sensibilities and made him proud, indifferent to pity and justice and the fulfilment of promises. God cannot put even the germs of these feelings into any human heart; much less can he increase them to such portentous magnitude as they attained in Pharaoh. We must start with the conviction and keep to it, that what God does is right, and that it is right not because he does it, but that he does it because it is right. It is not open for us first to fix our own interpretation of what may be meant by hardening the heart, and then call it an outrage on moral sense to say that God should do this. What if we have blundered in our interpretation?

IV. A right view of this statement must evidently also be taken in THE LIGHT OF ALL THAT WE KNOW BY AN APPEAL TO HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS. As no word God has ever spoken can contradict the facts of external nature, so neither can it contradict the facts of man's consciousness within. That which is true, independently of the teaching of Scripture, does not become less true, nor does it become false when Scripture begins to speak. Man is a free agent; he acts as one; he resents being treated otherwise by his fellow men. He is degraded and impoverished just in proportion as he sinks to a mere machine. His own decision is required every day, and he finds that wise decisions lead to profit, and foolish ones to loss. The law treats him as a free agent. Nay, more; what can be clearer than that God treated Pharaoh as a free agent? The plain statement that God hardened his heart is not more frequent than the equally plain statement that God demanded from him the liberation of Israel. If the one word is to be taken as simple verity, so is the other. If when God hardened Pharaoh's heart, he really did something in his nature; then also when he asked Pharaoh to liberate Israel, he asked something which he was at liberty to grant or refuse. Moses does not mock us with a mere trick of rhetoric in saying that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; neither did God mock Pharaoh with a useless appeal when he said, "Let my people go." Pharaoh knew well in his heart that it only needed his resolution and the whole of Israel could march forth at very short notice. He himself would have been amazed to hear that God had hardened his heart. True as it was, he would have denied it most strenuously and indignantly; and he would have denied it with justice, if it had been taken to mean the destruction of his own free agency.

V. We may now perhaps consider the ground sufficiently cleared for a positive conjecture as to what is meant by God hardening Pharaoh's heart. It means, we take it, THAT HE WORKED A MIRACULOUS CHANGE IN ONE OF PHARAOH'S NATURAL FACULTIES. There are certain things in every human being we do not hold that being responsible for, e.g., sex, features, temperament, acuteness and activity in senses and intellect. Some persons have good vision, others poor, others are altogether blind. In a similar way, some are naturally of a tenacious, determined will. Whatever they have set their mind upon, they hold to, with bull-dog grip. Others again are easily swayed about. Now clearly just as there are natural differences in sight, or hearing, or intellect, so there must be natural differences in this will-faculty. A man may have it very strong; he may be one who if he sets high and worthy aims before him, will be called resolute, inflexible, tenacious, indomitable, loyal to conscience; whereas if his aims be low, selfish and entirely without ground in reason, he will be called obstinate, stubborn, self-willed in the fullest sense of that word; and is it not plain that God may take this power of voli-

tion, this will-energy, and do with it, as we know that Jesus in many of his miracles did with defective or absent faculties? To the blind, Jesus gave vision, and he who could thus call a non-existent faculty into existence, evidently could increase a faculty actually existing to any degree such as man might be able to possess. And was it not something of this kind that God did in hardening Pharaoh's heart? The term has come to have a dreadful meaning to us in connexion with Pharaoh, simply because of Pharaoh's career. But the very miracle which God wrought in Pharaoh's heart would have had good results, *if only Pharaoh had been* a different sort of man. Suppose the instance of a blind man who gets sight from Jesus. He goes into life again with a recovered faculty: and that life, with respect to its opportunities, is vastly larger than it was before. How will he use these opportunities? He may use them selfishly, and Christ's own blessing will thus become a curse; or he may use them as Christ would have him use them, to become his efficient and grateful servant. There is a moral certainty that some who had faith enough in Jesus to have impaired natural faculties put right were yet destitute of that faith which went on to spiritual salvation and spiritual service. It was one thing to believe in Christ for a temporal gain, quite another to believe in him for a spiritual one; and the one faith while meant to lead on to the other, would not always have that effect. It is but a fond imagination to suppose that it would. So Pharaoh, if he had been a humane, compassionate and righteous man, a king with a true king's feelings for his own people, would, through the very process of hardening his heart, have become a more efficient ruler. This is the way God helps men who are struggling with temptation, struggling towards truth and light, towards conquest over appetite, violent temper, evil habits. God does for them and in them exactly what he did in Pharaoh. What he did in Pharaoh happened to hasten him in the way where he was already disposed to go. If Pharaoh had been a blind man as well as a bad one, no one would have had any perplexity as to God's dealings in restoring his sight and giving it the greatest perfection sight can attain. If Pharaoh had used that restored vision for bad, cruel purposes, *he* would have been blamed, and not *Jehovah*, and exactly the same remark applies if we change the name of the faculty. God strengthens the faculty of will, but Pharaoh is responsible for a right use of the strengthened faculty as much as he was for the use of the weaker faculty before. God dealt with a part of his nature where he had no power to resist any more than a blind man would have power to resist, if God were to restore vision to him. It was not against the hardening that Pharaoh struggled, but against the delivering. The hardening worked in a way he was not conscious of, but the delivering was by an appeal to him, and that appeal he was by no means disposed to entertain. It was not an awakened conscience that compelled him to his successive yieldings; these were but as the partial taming of a wild beast. Paul said, "When I would do good, evil is present with me;" but Pharaoh was steadily disposed to do evil. His cry would rather have been, "When I think to get my own way, one of those terrible plagues comes in to relax my resolutions and confuse my plans."

VI. A certain amount of weight must also be allowed for PHARAOH'S TYPICAL POSITION AND CHARACTER. We must distinguish between what he was typically and what he was personally. Far be it from us to diminish his guilt or attempt to whitewash his memory. Doubtless he was a bad man, and a very bad man; but for typical purposes it was needful to represent him as not having one redeeming feature. His name is not linked even with one virtue amid a thousand crimes. He had to be set before the whole world and all ages as the enemy of God's people. He is the type of a permanent adversary far greater than himself. And just as the people of God, typically considered, appeared very much better than they actually were, so Pharaoh, typically considered, is described so as to appear worse. (*E.g.* in Num. xxiii. 21, it is said, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.") We do not know all God's dealings with Pharaoh. They are hidden beneath the waters of the Red Sea, and it is no duty of ours to pass judgment on the defeated and baffled opponent. God calls us to the more practical business of going on with the living, struggling people.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 10—14.—THE TERROR OF ISRAEL AND THE COURAGE OF MOSES. It has been argued that the Israelites, if they were so numerous as stated (ch. xii. 37), must have been wretched cowards, if they were afraid to risk an engagement with such an army as that hastily levied one which Pharaoh had brought with him. But the difference between an army of trained soldiers, thoroughly equipped for war, with helmets, shields, breastplates, swords and spears, and an undisciplined multitude, unarmed for the most part, and wholly unaccustomed to warfare, is such, that the latter, whatever its numbers, may be excused if it does not feel able to cope with the former, and declines an engagement. Numbers, without military training and discipline, are of no avail—nay, are even a disadvantage, since the men impede one another. It is not necessary to suppose that the Israelites were debased in character by their long servitude to account for their panic on seeing the army of Pharaoh. They had good grounds for their fear. Humanly speaking, resistance would simply have led to their indiscriminate massacre. The alarm of the Hebrews, and even the reproaches with which they assail Moses, are thus quite natural under the circumstances. What is surprising is, the noble courage and confidence of Moses. Moses, though only vaguely informed, that God would “be honoured upon Pharaoh and all his host” (ver. 4), is perfectly certain that all will go well—how the result will be achieved, he knows not; but he is sure that Israel will be delivered and Egypt discomfited; his people have no reason to fear—they have but to “stand still and see the salvation of God” (ver. 13); “the Lord will fight for them;” they will have simply to “hold their peace” (ver. 14).

Ver. 10.—They were sore afraid. Before the Israelites are taxed with cowardice, let it be considered—1. That they were unarmed. Egypt was so settled a government that civilians generally went unarmed; and slaves, like the Hebrews, would scarcely have been allowed to possess any arms, if the case had been otherwise. 2. They had no military training. Whatever had been done to teach them order and arrangement in connection with their proposed journey, we may be sure there had been no drill or training in the use of arms, since this

would have been regarded by the Egyptians as open rebellion. 3. They were quite unaccustomed to warfare. The Pharaohs maintained large garrisons of Egyptian and mercenary troops in the frontier provinces, to resist the invasions to which they were liable. The Hebrews may have had occasionally to defend themselves against a hasty raid: but in real war they had stood aloof, and left the fighting to the regular Egyptian army. The children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. The appeal to Jehovah showed that, with all their weaknesses and imperfections, the Israelites were yet true at heart. They knew where alone help was to be obtained, and made their appeal accordingly. No cry is more sure of an answer than the despairing one—“Lord, save us; we perish.”

Ver. 11.—And they said to Moses. It was not unnatural that, while flying to God as their only refuge, they should be angry with Moses. Moses, they would argue, ought to have known better than to have brought them into a situation of such peril. He, the leader, should have known the geography of the country—he, the courtier, should have known the temper of the court. It is always a satisfaction to men to vent their anger upon some one when they are in a difficulty. No graves in Egypt. Egypt, with a necropolis outside every city, was “a land of tombs;” surely they might have found graves there, instead of being led out to such a distance simply to die.

Ver. 12.—Is not this the word that we did tell thee? The reference was probably to that time of depression, after their burdens had been increased, and before the series of miracles began, when the Israelites had addressed reproaches to Moses and Aaron (ch. v. 21), and refused to listen to words of encouragement (ch. vi. 9). It was not true that they had uniformly held the same language, and desired Moses and Aaron to cease their efforts. It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die. The spirit to prefer death to slavery, where they are the only alternatives, is not a common one; and we must not be surprised that a people which had grown up in servitude and had no traditions of national independence did not rise to the heroic height attained under other circumstances by Greeks, by Switzers, and by Poles. It would have been most extraordinary had they done so.

Ver. 13.—And Moses said . . . fear ye not. Moses knew that the pursuit of Israel by the host of the Egyptians was a part of the counsel of God, and was to tend in some way or other to the promotion of God's honour and glory (ver. 4). He had sufficient faith to believe in a deliverance the nature of which

it is not likely that he could anyway conjecture. Whether hail would fall from heaven and destroy them (Josh. x. 11); or the earth gape and swallow them up (Num. xvi. 32); or the angel of death smite them all in the night (2 Kings xix. 35); or any other strange form of destruction come upon them, he did not know; but he concluded from what had been revealed to him, that God was about to vindicate his own honour without the aid of man. Hence his words—Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord—which assigned to the Israelites a mere passive attitude of expectation. For the Egyptians, etc. The order of

the words in the original favours the marginal rendering, which is to be adopted with one slight change. Translate—"For, as ye have seen the Egyptians to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever," i.e., ye shall see them no more alive, vigorous and menacing, but still and lifeless upon the Red Sea shore (ver. 30). There is no reference to any other Egyptians than those with Pharaoh in the camp, nor to any later relations between Egypt and the chosen people.

Ver. 14.—Ye shall hold your peace—i.e. "do nothing, remain at rest."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 10—14.—*Divine trial a touchstone to distinguish faith from unfaithfulness.* The Israelites had almost as much ground as Moses to believe in God, and trust his providential care of them. They had seen the whole series of miracles which Moses had wrought. They had found themselves exempt from visitations which fell with the utmost severity on their near neighbours. They had heard from Moses God's positive promise to bring them into Canaan (ch. xiii. 5, 11). Yet at the first appearance of danger they lost all heart, all hope. They turned upon Moses with reproaches, taxed him with having brought them out of Egypt against their will, and expressed a readiness to return, and resume their old service. Moses, on the other hand, remained firm—did not blench—though, like the people, he felt the need of crying to God for aid (ver. 15), yet he did so in a different spirit from them—he with faith, they, in panic terror, without it; he, sure that God would somehow grant salvation, they expecting nothing less than almost immediate death. Thus the same trial which shows forth one man's faith and trust and confidence in God, reveals other men's want of faith. While things went smoothly, there was no apparent difference—an unprejudiced observer might have thought the people just as trustful as their leader—but it was not so; and God willed that the difference should be made apparent. God will have faith distinguished from unfaithfulness, and each recognised as what it really is.

I. FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS TRUE AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS, which he wills to have set forth in the eyes of men, out of the tender love he bears towards his people. Though they be at the best "unprofitable servants," he deigns to recognise merit in their service, and wishes them to be honoured and held in respect by others, assigning them this as a part of their reward.

II. FOR THE WARNING OF THE UNFAITHFUL ONES, who, unless a severe trial came, might remain self-deceived, imagining themselves to have true faith, though wholly lacking it.

III. FOR THE MERE RIGHT'S SAKE. Because he is a God of justice and of truth, abhorrent of pretence, semblance, make-believe; and always on the side of sincerity and openness. "There is nothing secret," he tells us, "that shall not be made manifest, nor hid that shall not be known" (Luke viii. 17). And this revelation of the true character of men and actions, which his truthfulness makes an ultimate necessity, his providence works for here. His trials are touchstones, potent to detect *shams*, and to prove the faithfulness of the faithful.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 10—23.—*The deliverance.* Consider on this section:—

I. THE CRITICAL SITUATION OF THE ISRAELITES. 1. Their *position*. "Encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal Zephon" (ver. 9). The first view of the sea would probably be attractive to them. Its breeze, after the tedious travel of the desert, would be deliciously refreshing. They would look with a child's wonder and delight on the novel spectacle it presented. They would crowd to the beach to watch

its dancing, white-tipped waves, and curiously to listen to its soft, lapping ripple on the shore. Yet this sea, which is to-day their joy and plaything, will have become by the morrow their terror and despair—their impregnable prison barrier. The experience is not uncommon. How often does it happen that the very things which at first we are disposed to hail with delight, to welcome and rejoice in, prove afterwards our greatest causes of sorrow! The engagements we enter into, the friendships we form, the bargains we make, the society we are introduced to, etc. 2. *The approach of the enemy.* "The children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold the Egyptians marched after them" (ver. 10). The mountains are around, the sea is in front, and now—terrible situation!—the Egyptians are pursuing, and close at hand. On they come, in whirling chariots, in ranks upon ranks of footmen; the long lines are seen defiling in the distance, and Israel knows that in an hour or two more the avalanche will be upon them, sweeping all before it, burying them in destruction. 3. *They were entirely unprepared.* They had been resting and unbending, not preparing for battle. The attack took them by surprise. There was no possibility under the circumstances of presenting an effectual resistance to the enemy. But, indeed, had the circumstances been ever so favourable, these hordes of slaves, accustomed so long to crouch before the rod of the taskmaster, would scarcely have attempted it. How critical, how perilous, therefore, the entire situation! A picture this of those straits of life formerly referred to, in which having done our utmost, we can do no more, and no alternative remains but prayer, and quiet waiting upon God.

II. *THEIR PANIC AND DESPAIR* (vers. 10—13). The appearance of the Egyptians naturally threw the Israelites into a state of the most acute terror. Remark: 1. *Great allowance must be made for them.* We do not read that, on this occasion, God dealt severely with them for the wild, ungrateful words they uttered. He made allowance. (1) Their situation was really very serious. Placed in like circumstances, we would perhaps not have shown much more faith than they did. (2) They were unused to the life of freedom. It takes time to teach those who have always been slaves to appreciate the blessings of the opposite condition. They carry their slave habits with them into the state of freedom. The Israelites had not as yet had much comfort in their emancipation. Their painful marches had probably been harder work than even the brick-making of Egypt. They could not as yet feel that it was better to be free, though enduring hardships in their freedom, than to be more comfortably situated and be slaves. Do we blame them? Then reflect how even Christians sometimes murmur and rebel at the self-denials, the sacrifices, the inconveniences, the persecutions, which their Christian freedom entails upon them. You complain, perhaps, that you have a harder time of it now, than even when you served the flesh. It may be true. But do not forget that the difference between your condition *now* and *then*, is all the difference between slavery and bondage, between salvation and a state of wrath. 2. *Israel's behaviour was nevertheless very unworthy.* (1) It was *faithless*. They did not wait to ask or see what God, who had already done so much for them, was about to do now, but at once concluded that he would leave them to perish. It is, indeed, said that they "cried unto the Lord" (ver. 10), but then, in the next breath, we read of them reproaching his servant and delegate (ver. 11). They are faithless prayers that come from faithless hearts. (2) It was *ungrateful*. How willing they had been to be led out of Egypt! yet now, at the first approach of danger, they turn on their leader, and taunt him for having given them their liberty. Was Moses to blame for the pursuit of Pharaoh? Or did he deserve to be thus required for the noble stand he had taken on their behalf? Public servants have often much to endure from the fickle humour of the crowd. (3) It was *cowardly*. It showed a servile and ignoble spirit even to breathe so base a regret as that they had not been suffered to continue in Egypt. 3. *The contrast of their conduct with that of Moses.* The bearing of Moses at this crisis was sublime in its calmness and trust. He does not return "railing for railing." No angry word escapes his lips in reply to the reproaches of the people. They murmur; he betakes himself to prayer (ver. 15). They look to the visible chariots; he to the invisible power which is mightier than all. They seem bereft of reason, fearing immediate death; he is calm, undaunted, self-collected, and gives them the best of counsel. Ponder his words—"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day" (ver. 13). (1) The situation was one in which God alone *could* bring salvation.

They could do nothing for themselves. The salvation must be God's from first to last (2) God *would* bring them this salvation. The fact that he had brought them into this strait was of itself a pledge that he would find them a way out of it. The believer, who finds himself in situations of difficulty, may cherish the same confidence. (3) Their duty was to *stand still*, and *see* this salvation. So long as means of help are put within our reach, it is our duty to use them. When no such means exist, or when all available means have been exhausted, and still the shadow overhangs us, what remains but to wait patiently on the help of the Most High? "Stand still"—in trust, in prayer, in expectancy, in readiness to advance the instant the word is given. "Stand still"—as opposed to weak murmurings, to passionate regrets, to foolish rebellion against circumstances you cannot alter,—so shall you "see the salvation of the Lord." If nothing else will do, God will cleave a way for you through the waves, or better still, will enable you, like Peter, to walk on them (Matt. xiv. 29).

III. GOD'S COMMAND TO MOSES (vers. 15-19). 1. The command came in answer to prayer. "Wherefore criest thou unto me" (ver. 15). The words contain no reproach, but imply that prayer needed on the instant to be exchanged for action. 2. Moses was to speak to the people that they go forward. See below. 3. He was to stretch his rod over the sea, and divide the waters (ver. 16). The confidence of Moses, that God would show a way of salvation, was thus justified by the result. The light was not given *as early* as the people might have wished, but it was given *in time*. God also announces to Moses his purpose of destroying the Egyptians (vers. 17, 18).

IV. THE ADVANCE THROUGH THE SEA. On this notice—1. *The change in the position of the pillar of cloud and fire* (vers. 19, 20). Moving to the rear, it stood between the Israelites and their pursuers, turning a bright side to the former, and a dark side to the latter. (See below.) By this seasonable change in its position, it (1) Illuminated the passage for the Israelites. The light would stream on in front. (2) Made the way dark and perilous for the pursuers. (3) Hid the pursuers from the pursued, and *vice versa*. This, besides being an additional *defence* to the Israelites, saved them from the terror which the *sight* of their pursuers would naturally awaken. It is related of a party of the Waldeuses, that escaping by night from their cruel persecutors, their path lay through the rugged and perilous defiles of the Alps. At length the day broke, and under the light of the rising sun, they turned to survey the track along which they had trod. By a unanimous and irresistible impulse, they fell on their knees to thank God for their marvellous preservation. "Here, they had walked on the very verge of a tremendous precipice where a false step would have dashed them to atoms; there, they had skirted the banks of a mountain lake, whose black waters seem to indicate unfathomable depths," etc. But the dangers amidst which they had moved had been veiled by the impenetrable darkness. There are some things which it is better for us not to see. Learn (1) That God adapts his manifestations of himself to his people's needs. (2) That God's presence with his Church is an effectual bulwark against attack. He can hide his people from their pursuers. He can darken the path of the latter; can confound their wisdom, divide their counsels, perplex them in their courses, and obstruct their progress by providential obstacles. (3) Spiritually, in times of temptation and trial, we may rely on being illuminated by God's truth, defended by God's power, and ultimately conducted to a place of safety. 2. *The division of the waters* (ver. 21). (1) It was accomplished by natural agencies, supernaturally directed. "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night." The recognition of natural agency in no wise detracts from the supernatural character of the transaction; nay, seeing that direct miracles are no longer to be looked for by the Church, it is even more helpful to faith to find that natural means were employed in this instance, than if the result had been wholly miraculous. It heightens our conceptions of what God *can* accomplish by means of the agencies of nature. Instance the defeat of the Spanish Armada (2) It was unexpected and surprising. In considering the ways by which God might conceivably save them, the Israelites probably never dreamt of his opening a path through the sea. So, in those straits of life to which reference has been made, help usually arrives from unexpected quarters, in a way we had not thought of. "God's way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known" (Ps. lxxvii. 19). (3) It afforded the passage that was required. The march through

the sea, certainly, would not be without its difficulties. The violent gale, the thunderings and lightnings (Ps. lxxvii. 18), the darkness, the boom of the distant waters, the lurid light of the fiery cloud, the uneven passage, the panic and confusion, the strangeness and fearfulness of the entire situation, would make it an experience never to be forgotten. But if the road was difficult, it was practicable. They could pass by it. God promises to make a way for us. He does not promise that the way will always be an easy one. 3. *The safe transit* (ver. 22). The children of Israel got safely across. They were preserved in the very midst of the hostile element. Nay, the sea, which they had so much dreaded, became on either side a protecting wall to them. The same superintending Providence which secured, in the shipwreck of Paul, that "so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land" (Acts xxvii. 44), doubtless brought about a like happy result in the case of the Israelites. Their deliverance became, in after days, the type of any great deliverance wrought by God for his saints. See the figure wrought out in Ps. xviii. 4—20.—J. O.

Ver. 11.—*Cruel words out of cowardly hearts.* There was much, as we have seen, to excuse the terror of Israel; but there is one thing not so easy to excuse, and that is the sarcastic, unjust spirit in which these terrified Israelites treat their visible leader. Formerly (ch. v. 21) they had turned on him with bitter reproaches; but their conduct then was the effect of ignorance and hasty expectations, and their language, however strong, was simply the language of reproach. But now to reproach they add *sarcasm*; they speak so as to set Moses in a ridiculous as well as a painful position. We may suppose that when the question was asked, "Whatever can we have been brought here for?" some of the wits of Israel would reply, "There is no room in Egypt to bury us, and so we are brought to be buried here." Then this sharp speech, quickly flying from lip to lip, as clever things usually do, would in no long time become the well-nigh universal thought. We have then here to consider the evils of sarcastic speech. That such speech may do good sometimes, and sometimes be necessary, need not be denied. But inasmuch as the temptation is almost entirely the other way, we may dismiss as needless the work of considering what benefits there may be in sarcastic speech. The ills of sarcasm have so far outweighed the good, that we had better set ourselves earnestly to consider *them*. Is it not to be presumed that fewer such sayings would fall from our lips, if only we habitually considered all the ill effects that may flow from such a way of speaking?

I. CONSIDER THE PAIN INFLICTED BY SARCASTIC SPEECH. There may be a great deal of pain inflicted where no sense of pain is expressed. Moses does not here take any notice of this bitter, clever, far-echoing word about the graves; but thereby, he only gives another illustration of his characteristic natural meekness. He may have felt, and felt deeply, even though he did not speak. If, indeed, he reckoned nothing of these words, we should hardly think so well of him. To be what is called thick-skinned is not good, if it is meant thereby that one has no perception of the insolent, inconsiderate language of others. Lack of sensibility to pain means a corresponding lack of sensibility to pleasure. We can no more avoid feeling pain when a harsh word is spoken, than when we receive a cut or a blow. No doubt it is pleasant to say sharp, clever things; but the pleasure is a momentary one, an entirely selfish one; it will not bear thinking about; and it may inflict a durable pain. Sharp words may be like barbed arrows that not all the lapse of years can work out of the memory. Assuredly we must not shrink from inflicting pain, if duty, affection, and prudence point that way; but we had need to be very sure of the indications. To inflict bodily pain for our own pleasure is admittedly an unchristian thing; and yet what a monstrous inconsistency is revealed in the fact that persons who would not tread on a worm, are constantly found inflicting the intensest pain by the words they speak. Knock a man down, and you might do him less harm than by the few words that pass so lightly, easily, and pleasantly between your lips. Less harm is done by the fist than by the tongue.

II. CONSIDER THE INJUSTICE DONE BY IT. Sarcastic speeches never can be true speeches. If they were true, it would be no justification of them, but in the very nature of things they cannot be true. They must have about them, more or less, elements of the false and exaggerated. If a thing is to be sharp at all, there is an

irresistible temptation to make it as sharp and striking as possible; and truth cannot but suffer in the process. Epigrams are always to be distrusted. *How clearly the injustice of sharp sayings comes out in the illustration before us!* The speech about these graves was a witty, clever one, but how unjust! As it happened, Moses was under no responsibility whatever for bringing the Israelites to this particular place. He had not been left to use his own judgment and discretion, but was as much under the guidance of the cloudy pillar as all the rest. Hence from this illustration we receive a slight warning that we may not only be inflicting *pain*, which is *much*, but *injustice*, which is a great deal *more*. You who would not steal the least fragment of a man's property, be equally careful to speak no word which may do hurt to his reputation. Speak that you may inflict no pain; speak also that you may do no injustice.

III. CONSIDER THE PERIL TO THE SPEAKER HIMSELF. Cleverness is a perilous, and not unfrequently a fatal gift. To be sharper than our neighbours may prove in the end a dangerous thing for our own interests. Some who are admired, courted, widely spoken about, for their powers of mimicry, find in the end that it might have been far more for their comfort and permanent well-being, if they had been of only commonplace abilities. To be admired is a poor satisfaction, mere dust and ashes, if it has to stand instead of being loved. Make fun of other people, seize without mercy on their weaknesses, their follies and their natural defects, and the chances are that you will find yourself exposed, in turn, to like treatment. Those who attack with sharp speeches are just the men who deserve—if they always got their deserts, and it were expedient to retaliate—equally sharp speeches in return. What about these Israelites here? Did they not by talking in this fashion show clearly what a mean, miserable company they were? They hurt themselves far more than they hurt Moses. There is hardly one who takes pride in what he calls his plain speaking, but might be pilloried himself, and greeted with sarcastic speeches as severe as any he had uttered, and probably more charged with truth. And the worst of all is, that in the end those habituated to evil-speaking may find themselves forsaken in their own great need. We need friends, and, if we would have them, we must show ourselves friendly. If we go through the world constantly replenishing our sarcastic quiver with arrows, and stretching the bow on every slight provocation, then we must expect people to give us a wide berth; and when at last we come to be stricken ourselves, it will be no matter of just complaint if we are left well-nigh alone.

IV. CONSIDER HOW MUCH GOOD IS THWARTED AND NEUTRALISED BY THIS WAY OF SPEAKING. We may flatter ourselves that there is good to be gained in making folly ridiculous, and so there may be; but it can only be when the speaker is one of great wisdom, goodness, and habitual elevation of life. Certainly we find in the Scriptures the language of solemn irony from God himself; but his words are above our criticism, and we are not at liberty to speak as he speaks. We are all upon the same level of sin, ignorance, and partial views, and must speak as remembering this level. To affect authority and superior station will be ruinous to all good effects from any remonstrance of ours. Whatever truth is revealed to us, and put upon our consciences to speak, must be spoken in love, in humility, and in the very best season we can find. If it is really our desire to win others to better, wiser and manlier courses, we had better not begin with sharp speeches. True it may be that the world is mostly made up of fools, and perhaps there is no occasion when we do more to prove our own place in the large company than when, in our contempt and impatience, we call other people fools. We are not then behaving as fishers of men. We are not then becoming all things to all men in order to save some. Many a Christian has had to sorrow for his imperfect control over the gift of intellectual quickness. Before his conversion, he used his gift of wit, repartee, and ludicrous conception with careless freedom and delight, not staying to consider whom he hurt, whom he hindered. Then when such a one submits at last to the true lord of the intellect, he finds it hard, in this matter in particular, to bring his thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

V. GOD'S PEOPLE MUST THEMSELVES PREPARE TO BE SARCASTICALLY AND BITTEBLY SPOKEN OF. Only let each one of us consider his own temptation to say hard things, and then we shall cease to wonder that hard things are said of us. We cannot expect to receive from others, but as we give to them. Anyway we must be ready for hard things, ready in particular for hard speeches. Where Christ went, his people must go;

and he went in a path where he was called a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. If he was sneered at on the very Cross, it is babyish on our part to complain because the world sneers at us in the comparatively easy paths we have to tread. Our strength, our joy, and our serenity must not depend on the world's opinion. Moses was getting a hint even thus early that he must not expect consideration from his brethren, with respect to his feelings and difficulties. The joys of Moses were to be got from quite another direction, even from the assiduous tenderness of Jehovah himself.

VI. CULTIVATE A HABIT OF PITIFUL CONSIDERATION TOWARDS THE MEN OF SARCASMATIC SPEECH. Remember that they are not happy men. How can a man be happy whose eye is for ever lighting on the blots and loathsome ulcers of human nature; who seems to have a morbid acuteness of vision with respect to them, but to become purblind when noble and Divinely-produced elements of character appear? Such a man is to be pitied with Christ's own gentle pity. Do not meet his sarcasm with sarcasm, but here emphatically return good for evil. Force him to see that there is a great deal more in the world, *if only he will look for it*, than duplicity, selfishness, and stupidity. Show him how to discern, even in the jostling and wrangling crowd, men who have in them the mind which was in Christ.—Y.

The passage of the Red Sea.—"Fear ye not, stand still (firm), and see the salvation of God" (Ex. xiv. 13). Mark, by way of introduction, the critical character of this event, the greatest in Old Testament history. (For valuable suggestions on this point, see Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," p. 33, and Ewald's "History of Israel," vol. ii. p. 70, Eng. ed. Ewald even is constrained to speak of "this event, whose historical certainty is well established.") Lay solid foundations for sermonic treatment by describing first the scene, expounding the history, and then evolving the truths in the history.

I. THE SCENE. In the Gospels, the spiritual significance is almost independent of topography. Only two or three scenes (*e.g.*, Jacob's well: the ridge whence Jesus saw from Olivet the city and wept over it), can be absolutely and certainly identified. But here sermon and story are inextricably blended with sea and shore. Note! twice change of direction: (1) not by way of Philistia: (2) not by caravan road, round by the mouth of the western arm of the Red Sea; but brought into a position of extreme danger, with the sea roaring between Israel and the freedom of the desert. The writer of this section of the commentary believes, that Israel encamped on what is now known as the plain of Suez, the sea reaching then much further north than now. (See maps and interesting article, "Une Splendeur de la Foi," by L'Abbé Moigno, in "Les Mondes" for Aug. 28, 1879.) Any detailed map will show—that there Israel would have the sea on the east, hills to north and south, an open valley to the west, along which the Egyptian forces would charge. Deepen the impression, that these two millions of people, some indeed armed, but not yet organised, with women, children, and the aged, were in a position *utterly hopeless*. It was a situation of despair—but that which is impossible with man is possible with God.

II. THE HISTORY. One of the objects should be to vivify and make very real to the hearers, the histories of the Old Testament, which sometimes seem so very far away from modern thought and life. With this intent, bring out clearly, by aid of exposition elsewhere, points like these:—probably seven days elapsed between the Passover and the song on the eastern shore of the sea, occupied thus:—1. By *Israel*. On the 15th, to Succoth, fifteen miles; on the 16th, to Etham, fifteen miles; on the 17th, to the dangerous position by the sea; on the 18th, 19th, and 20th, encamped there, completing arrangements for the pilgrimage to Sinai and Palestine. 2. By *Egypt*. Every movement watched by the government; night of 15th, report from Succoth; of the 16th, from Etham; morning of the 17th, courier could carry in a few hours, over the thirty miles, intelligence that Israel had taken the wrong (?) road. Sudden determination of the king. Had three days to overtake. Called together six hundred picked chariots, other chariots, infantry, and led in person. On the afternoon of the 20th, the pickets of Israel saw far away the force coming over the sand ridges. Horror of the two millions. The

¹ In this article the Abbé proposes to raise £12,000 to search in the sand for the debris of Pharaoh's army. See Is. xi. 15

splendid cities of tombs in Egypt rose to the memory. But here soon a sort of gigantic anticipation of Isandula. A cry against Moses, and unto Jehovah. The moral attitude of Moses mixed—cheer for the people—a fainting heart before God. His silent prayer. “The upward glancing of an eye.” The word of assurance. “Forward.” The movement of what must have been, in this instance, *wall* of cloud and fire, to give soft electric light to Israel and over the sea, to be darkness to Egypt, and to cover the greatest military movement in all history. The short time demanded perfect order. Then came the ploughshare of the east wind. In the confusion and darkness, Egypt eagerly followed. The look out of the cloud, shot with thunderbolt—a look which meant ruin. Sea rolls back from the rear of Egypt. Chariot clashes against chariot. Wheels lost. On the night of the 14th Israel became a *nation*. On the morning of the 21st the nation was *free*.

III. TRUTHS. 1. *Neither first nor even second openings in life are always into the way God intends us to take.* A common error to suppose that any opening is “providential.” Not *viâ* Philistia: nor the caravan road to Sinai. God’s object to develop moral thoughtfulness, and the scrutiny of apparent leading. *E.g.*, Will this course imperil my principle, lead into temptation, and ruin my soul? 2. *Seemingly hopeless entanglement may have great issues.* Moral firmness developed: dependence upon God. Salvation complete, and anthem of victory. 3. *The temper for crisis is that of calm confidence.* No panic! Had there been panic, Israel had been food for Egyptian sabres! “Stand firm!” (see Heb.) Apply this to state of religion; things social, political, at home and abroad; to affairs personal. (See good sermon on this, by Professor Jowett, in “Christian World Pulpit,” March 26, 1879.) 4. *Confidence should express itself in prayer.* Note the difference: the cry of Israel, and the evidently silent appeal of Moses. 5. *Action must follow prayer.* “Wherefore criest,” etc., an intimation that prayer was already answered; and now Moses to the front, and every man to his post. 6. *When God leads into danger, He will certainly see us safely through it.* If wantonly and wilfully we go into danger, we *may* (through mercy) be delivered; if on Divine leading, we *shall*. *E.g.*, going into some scene of vice, out of curiosity, or worse motive; on the other hand, at the request of a distant friend, to save a soul. Difference between presumption and courage. 7. *Salvations of God are ever timely and complete.* 8. After God’s great salvation comes, *the dumbness of amazement, and after the dumbness, song.* “Jehovah shall fight for you, and ye shall be *dumb*.” (Heb. xiv. 31; xv. 1; Rev. xv. 2—4.)—R.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 15—18.—GOD’S ANSWER TO MOSES’

PRAYER. To the faithful prayer of Moses, albeit pitched perhaps in too low a key, God made gracious answer. A “cry” had been unnecessary, since his word was already pledged to bring his people safe to Canaan, and to get himself honour upon Pharaoh in connection with the pursuit (ver. 4). But, as the appeal has been made, he responds with a plain statement of what has now to be done:—1. The Israelites are to make themselves ready for a forward movement (ver. 15); 2. Moses is to stretch out his rod over the Red Sea, and it will be divided; 3. The Israelites are then to make the passage on dry ground; 4. The Egyptians are to follow, and then honour is to be gotten upon them; and they are to know by the result that God is indeed Jehovah.

Vers. 15, 16.—Wherefore criest thou to me? It is evident that Moses, while boldly encouraging the people, himself needed the support and consolation of prayer. The Syriac translator shows us that he divined the fact aright, when he without authority intruded the words, “Moses then cried to Jehovah.” The form of the Divine reply to his prayer seems to indicate a certain amount of reproach, as if Moses himself had become unduly anxious. *Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.* The Israelites were not to rest in their encampment, but to form in line of march, and descend to the very shore of the sea, and there hold themselves in readiness. Moses was to *lift up his rod*—the rod with which his other miracles had been wrought—and *stretch out his hand over the sea*, and then the drying up was to begin. Thus was most of the night passed.

Ver. 17.—I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians. Here, and here only, are the

hearts of the Egyptians generally said to have been "hardened." Whatever meaning we attach to the expression, there will be no more difficulty in applying it to them than to Pharaoh. They had made themselves partakers in the monarch's guilt by mustering in hot haste when he summoned them, and had allowed themselves to revel in the anticipation of plunder and carnage (ch. xv. 9). Under such circumstances, the general laws which govern human nature would be quite sufficient to make their hearts grow hard. They shall follow them. Upon this act—rash, if the phenomenon had been a mere natural one—presumptuous and infatuated if the drying up were regarded as miraculous—depended altogether the destruction of the Egyptians. They had only to have "stood

still" and allowed the escape, which a week previously they had done their best to encourage, in order to have remained safe and unhurt. It was their stupidity and blood-thirstiness which alone brought them into any danger. Upon his horsemen. Rather "his chariotmen." See the comment on verse 9.

Ver. 18.—The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. All Egypt would learn the destruction of the host, and the circumstances under which it occurred, whose miraculous nature could not be concealed. And the consequence would be a wide recognition of the superior might of Jehovah, the God of Israel, over that of any of the Egyptian deities. More than this the Egyptians were not likely to admit under any circumstances.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15—18.—*The reward of faith.* God rewarded the faith and trust of Moses by a revelation of the manner of that deliverance which he so confidently expected. Hitherto the manner had been involved in mystery; and it is scarcely likely that any one had even conjectured it as a possible thing. There was no precedent for *such* an interference with the laws of nature; and the thought could scarcely occur to the imagination of any one. But, to reward his faithful servant, to quiet his anxiety, and give definiteness to his expectations of deliverance, God now plainly revealed the mode in which he would save his people. God is ever "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and especially rewards faith. The faith of Abraham, which made him trust God's promise to create of him a great nation, when as yet he had no child, obtained for him the gift of Canaan and the covenant of circumcision. The faith of Noah, who believed God's threat of a deluge, which all the rest of the world scorned, saved him and his family from perishing by water. The faith of Enoch, by which he "walked with God"—though he could not see him—caused God to "take him." Faith brings us, to a certainty,—1. The present blessing of an assured trust which nothing can imperil; 2. Quietness and confidence—the feeling that we may "stand still and see the salvation of God;" 3. Freedom from panic fears and unworthy apprehensions; 4. Cheerfulness and hopefulness—a conviction that God will give us what is best for us. Faith may also, by God's mercy, obtain for us further gifts in the future—blessings not naturally arising out of it, but added to it as rewards by God, and signs of his approval. The faith of Moses was ultimately rewarded, 1. By success in the great object of his life—the liberation of his people and their safe-conduct through all the perils of the wilderness to the verge of Canaan; 2. By God's approval of him as "Moses, the servant of the Lord" (Deut. xxxiv. 5); and 3. By the vision of Canaan from Pisgah.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 15.—"*Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward!*" **I. FORWARD!**—God's CONSTANT INJUNCTION TO HIS CHURCH. The law of Christian life is *advance*. God never brings his Church or people into positions from which retreat is necessary, or in which advance is impossible. We may bring *ourselves* into false positions of this kind, but God never leads us into them. In proportion as we surrender ourselves to his guidance, we may depend on being conducted always "forward." There is no instance in the whole history of the Old or New Testament Church in which, while God's guidance was followed, retreat had to be made. Forward! (1) In Christian attainments. (2) In holy living. (3) In labours for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. (4) In missionary enterprise. (5) In doing good to our fellow-men.

II. FORWARD!—IN CONTRAST WITH VAIN LAMENTATIONS, AND UNBECOMING EXPOSTULATIONS WITH PROVIDENCE. These do no good, but much harm. They betray an unbelieving spirit. If God brings us into situations of trial, the fact that it is he who brings us into them is of itself a pledge that with the trial, he will make also a way of escape (1 Cor. x. 13). When the foe bears hard upon us, we should, instead of losing heart, rather feel that the time has come for getting everything in readiness for advance—the “great door and effectual” must be on the very point of opening.

III. FORWARD!—BY THE WAY WHICH GOD MAKES FOR US. At the same moment that he is saying—“Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward,” he is doubtless commissioning some Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea, to open up the way for us. God never says “Forward,” without at the same time opening the way.

IV. FORWARD!—WITH GOOD HEART, STRONG HOPE, AND FIRM ASSURANCE OF BEING PROTECTED ON THE JOURNEY. Going forward at God’s word, the Israelites were assured of God’s protection. They were certain of reaching the further shore in safety. No fear of the waves rushing back, and burying *them*. Pharaoh pursued, but he was not permitted to capture them, and was himself overthrown. We may confront any perils, if duty calls, and God goes with us. Cf. Luther at Worms.—J. O.

Vers. 15—18.—*Obedience necessary to salvation.* I. THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO ARE LEADERS AMONG THEIR BRETHREN IN TIMES OF TRIAL. 1. There is a time for action as well as prayer: “Wherefore criest thou unto me?” (1) The time of the leader must not be spent in prayer only—there are arrangements to make and needs to meet. In times of difficulty God asks for obedience. A path of love, of forgiveness of injuries, of some service, lies right before us as our duty in that hour. True faith will walk in it. This too is an appeal to our Father as well as prayer. (2) Unbelief may hide itself behind a form of devotion. 2. To speak to them that they go forward. 3. To do what God bids them in opening up their brethren’s way. “Lift thou up thy rod.” The lifting up of the rod seemed a vain thing, but it clove a path for Israel through the heart of the sea. Our service for our brethren in the day of their trouble may cleave a way for them. A people’s progress may be hindered by a leader’s indolence and selfishness.

II. GOD’S UNCEASING WORKING ON HIS PEOPLE’S BEHALF (vers. 17, 18). 1. His mercy was veiled, but he was working still. The very pursuit of the foe was from him. 2. Egypt had still to receive one crowning lesson regarding Jehovah’s might and unflinching guardianship of his people. When foes pursue, when sins rise up to recover their former sway, it is that God may destroy the one and judge the other.—U.

Vers. 13—31.—*God completes the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh and removes their terror.* I. NOTE THE WAY IN WHICH MOSES MEETS THE COMPLAINTS OF THE ISRAELITES. They had addressed to him sarcastic, flippant, and in every way unworthy speeches. They were not so filled with fear, not so occupied with the troubles of their own hearts, but that they could find a malignant delight in striving to make him ridiculous. This mingling of feelings on their part, fear mingled with hate, makes the single-heartedness of his reply all the more manifest and beautiful. The time is not one for him to stand on his own dignity, or bandy sharp language with mean men, even were his character such as to incline him that way. There is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous; in one sense he makes that step, and by his noble, impressive exhortation, he at once sweeps the ridiculous out of the path of the sublime. The subject of the grave surely is never a seemly one for jesting; and the jesting was unseemliest of all at this present hour. One almost sees these little, pert jokers retreating into the background before the great believer. They would not trouble him again for a while. It was not Israel that had come out of Egypt seeking for graves, but Pharaoh and his host. These murmurers did indeed find graves in the wilderness by and by; but it was for a subsequent transgression. It is part of the peculiar pathos of human life that no one can tell where he must die and be buried. So much then with respect to the meek and comely attitude—true attitude of a prophet of God—which Moses here assumed. He rises clear above the little men of the crowd, for God has taken him out, in particular, *with a high hand*, and now what shall the matter of his answer be? He does not turn towards God doubtfully. (Contrast his conduct here

with his conduct in ch. v. 22—23.) The peril is to the natural eye overwhelming, but it is not peril to him, for God has filled him with the spirit of faith. He himself, unfearing, can tell the people not to fear. He himself, calmly expectant that some great deliverance is on the way, can recommend, his face not belying his tongue, the same calm expectancy to the people. Let them stand still and wait, instead of rushing hither and thither, weakening themselves still more by their disorder. Moses, exactly comprehending that the position is one in which *man can do nothing*, and *God must do everything*, presses this view on his brethren. What is his personal dignity, his *amour-propre*, compared with the glorious view to be opened out to them? Here is a lesson then, when people speak to us out of little envies and personal grudges. Reply by directing them to great soul-filling truths. Lead, if you can, mean, grovelling souls to the mountain top. Give them the chance of seeing the wide inheritance of the saints; and if they cannot take it in, then the loss, and the responsibility of the loss, is theirs.

II. NOTE THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH GOD GIVES TO MOSES, vers. 15—18. These instructions, astounding as they must have seemed at the time, were, nevertheless, eminently practical. Those who bear the name of practical among men are those who keep well within what is reckoned possible by the ordinary judgment. Men of the Columbus type, such as great discoverers and great inventors, have to bear for long enough the name of being mere visionaries, day-dreamers, wasters of life. But God's practicality is to set his servants at once to things reckoned impossible. His directions are very simple: "Go forward." He waits till the people are indeed shut up on every hand, and then he says, "Go forward." They were to continue in the same direction, and that led onward to the sea. This was the appointed path to the mountain where they were to serve God. Yes; and if the path had been through the rocky steeps which enclosed them, God could have dissolved those steeps away. Or if it had been through Pharaoh's host, he could have smitten that host utterly, as he afterwards did Sennacherib's. Notice that in this command *there is another proving of faith*. First, with regard to *Moses*. For it will be observed that there is nothing to show that Moses knew anything of what would happen in the Red Sea, until God now made it known. Probably during the whole course of the plagues, the precise nature of each plague was revealed to Moses only just as it was approaching. And so here, in this new imprisonment, he was quietly waiting for light to come from God, well knowing that sufficient would be done to deliver Israel—that God had led his people into this entanglement, not without a perfectly definite purpose, and that the end of all would be the destruction of the Egyptians. But he knew not any more than the least child in Israel, until just beforehand, how all this was to be brought about. There was also a *great proving of the faith of the people*. God has a command for them, and it is one requiring great faith. Notice how appropriately it comes on, as the climax of past treatment. We have seen the Israelites sharing at first in the sufferings of the Egyptian plagues. After a while, the district in which they reside is exempted from the plagues. Then when the first-born are smitten, the Israelites, *by their obedience to Jehovah's instructions*, escape the blow. And now at last their escape is to be completed by again obeying Jehovah's instructions, and *equally in the obedience of a pure faith*. But mark the most important advance and development of faith, which is here illustrated. Two quite different states of mind are brought out by slaying the passover lamb in faith, and by going towards and through the Red Sea in faith. To slay the passover lamb is to do a thing for which no reason is given but the command of God. *But it is a thing which plainly can be done*. It involves no peril; there is no appearance of impossibility about it; the only temptation is to think it useless, a superfluous reasonless form. On the other hand, it is perfectly plain that passage through the Red Sea will provide escape. The question is, can such a passage be gained, and therein the temptation lies. In slaying the passover lamb, the Israelites had to humble their intellects before Divine wisdom; in advancing to the Red Sea, they had to show the utmost confidence in Divine power. We must steadily believe that all God commands is useful and necessary; we must also steadily believe that all which is fit for him to do, he most assuredly can do. It is a matter deserving consideration that Jehovah should have given such a command, *seeing the state of unbelief and carnality in which the Israelites evidently were*. They had not spoken like men ready for such an awful miracle. But we can see certain things which made obedience easier. For one thing, God had shut them up to it. If they had been taken down to the Red Sea,

with no Pharaoh behind, with no enclosing mountains on either hand, they might have rebelled. But circumstances lent a strong compulsive aid. We know not what we can do, what triumphs of faith we can achieve till God shuts us up to them. Then there was something also in the sight of the rod. God commanded Moses to exhibit something which had already been associated with wonderful deeds. Thus we see God making plain to Israel the way out of their peril, and so far all is definite. But this being told, the definite immediately shades away into the indefinite. The *indefinite* mark, but not therefore the *uncertain*. All is manifest and straightforward with regard to the Israelites; they are to be safe. *But what about Pharaoh and his army?* We remember Peter's question to Jesus concerning John (John xxi. 21). "Lord, what shall this man do?" So Moses might have questioned Jehovah—"Lord, what is to happen to Pharaoh?" Something on this matter Jehovah does say, just enough to preserve confidence, attention and expectation; but for the details Moses and Israel must wait a little longer. Meanwhile an inspiring hint is given of great judgment, great humiliation, and for Jehovah himself, great glory. Here the information stops; and here we again notice the eminent practicality of God's instructions. For the day's need and for our own need God gives us the amplest guidance; but what is to happen to our enemies, and exactly how they are to be removed he keeps within his own knowledge, as within his own power. The proper answer to all impious and curious prying on our part is that which Jesus gave to Peter—"What is that to thee? follow thou me."

III. NOTE THE CONSEQUENT DEALINGS OF JEHOVAH IN DELIVERING ISRAEL AND DESTROYING THE EGYPTIANS. 1. *The altered position of the cloudy pillar.* The angel of God removed and went behind. By the angel of God is possibly meant the pillar itself. Just as the burning bush is described as a messenger of God (ch. iii. 2), so here there seems an indicating of the cloudy pillar as another messenger. Just at this moment it was not wanted for purposes of guidance. Indeed it would not have proved sufficient for these purposes. Jehovah had found it needful himself to intervene and signify by unmistakable words, the way in which he would have the people go. The cloudy pillar was enough for guidance only as long as the Israelites were in open and ordinary paths. But where it could not be used for *guidance*, it could be used for *defence*. God's messengers can easily change their use. The cloud, by changing its place, hindered Egypt, and thereby helped Israel. Nor did it help Israel in this way alone; the boon was a positive as much as a negative one. Surely this was a marvellous cloud, for it had in it darkness as well as light. Thus it served a double purpose. Hiding Israel from the Egyptian eyes, it proved the best of fortifications. But at the same time it shone upon the Israelites and gave them the benefits of day with the immunities of night. They could put everything in perfect order for the march, so as to take it the moment the way through the sea was ready. Imagine that miraculous light shining down on that miraculous path, even from end to end; just like a light shining down a street; and as it were pointing Israel onward, even though it stood behind them. Thus we are made to think of *all the double aspect of the work of Jesus*, how at the same time he confounds his enemies and guides and cheers his friends. Consider this especially in connection with his resurrection. On the one hand he abolished death; on the other he brought life and immortality to light. 2. *The obedience of Moses and the Israelites to the Divine command.* As we have noticed, all this had been well prepared for beforehand. Moses had been led up to it, and so had Israel; and therefore when the moment came, there was no hesitation. After what has been already said there is no need to dwell on this actual obedience. It is enough to note in passing, that God having duly arranged all conspiring causes, the effect followed as a matter of course. But now we come to the point of main interest in the closing section of this chapter, namely, 3. *The conduct, treatment, and ultimate fate of the Egyptians.* There is first, *their infatuated advance.* They go down in the path which Jehovah had made for Israel as if it was to remain a path for them. The Egyptians were too full of their purpose, too full of the spirit of vengeance and greed to notice their danger, even though it was a danger of the most obvious kind. They might have gone into certain positions where a miracle would have been required to put them in danger; but here the miracle is already wrought, and these enemies of Jehovah and Jehovah's people advance, as if the piled-up waters were thus to remain, their

shape settled for ages to come, just like the shape of the solid hills around. The only thing to explain their conduct is the momentum that had been produced in their own breasts. It was with them just as it is with the runner when he has gained a certain speed. Suppose in his headlong career he comes to a chasm, stop he cannot. Either he must clear the chasm or fall into it. The next point to be noticed is *God's treatment of them in their advance*. The whole progress of affairs is exactly arranged so as to produce the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of Pharaoh. The very nearness of Pharaoh and his army to the Israelites, instead of proving ruin to them, only more effectually proves ruin to him. Some of the more timid among the Israelites might be tempted to say, "Oh! that the waters would return, immediately the last Israelite is ashore; let the great barrier be set between us and Pharaoh as soon as possible." But such a course would only have secured a present safety at the expense of a future one. Jehovah has a far better way of working than any which human panic can suggest. He lets the Egyptians go on until the whole army is in the midst of the sea, and then he who has truly proved himself a man of war opens the last decisive battle by making the chariots useless. Nay, not only were they useless; they seem to have become a hindrance and a terror. Jehovah neither hastens nor lingers; he smites at the right time, and therefore he smites effectually; and now we are called to listen to a *resolution made too late*. "Let us flee from the face of Israel." If only they had been wise in time, they would not have had to flee at all. What were *they* doing in the midst of the Red Sea? Nay more, what were they doing out of their own country? They had trifled and trifled with danger after danger, and now they had trifled beyond escape. It is no time to talk of flight when the door of the trap has fallen. The waters are on the point of returning; the ordinary course of nature is about to assert itself. Why should that course be interrupted one moment longer, simply to preserve a host of proud and dangerous men. The great lesson from Pharaoh's fall is *to be wise in time*. Flee from the wrath to come! there is a possibility of that; but when the wrath has come, who then shall flee? (Rev. vi. 16-17).

IV. NOTE THE IMPRESSION SAID TO HAVE BEEN PRODUCED ON THE MINDS OF THE ISRAELITES. Ver. 31. More desirable words surely could not be spoken of any people than that they fear Jehovah and believe in him and his servants. The fear and the faith, however, must be of the right sort, arising out of a right state of the heart, and cleaving to God through all the vicissitudes of circumstance. Such unfortunately was not the fear and faith of these Israelites. We must have heart knowledge of God's character, and come to understand how necessary it is to pass through a shaking of the things that can be shaken in order that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Then we shall fear as we ought to fear, and believe as we ought to believe.—Y.

EXPOSITION.

Ver. 19—22.—THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA. The Egyptians had arrived in the near neighbourhood of the Israelite camp, at the close of a long day's march, towards evening. Having ascertained that the fugitives were still, as they had expected them to be, shut in between the sea and the wilderness, they were content, and made no immediate attack, but encamped over against them. Hereupon, "the pillar of the cloud," which was at the time in front of the Israelite camp—probably near the point where God intended the passage of the sea to be effected—"removed" from this position, and placed itself directly behind the Israelite encampment, between them and the Egyptians. This movement

alone was calculated to alarm the latter, and prevent them from stirring till near day-break; but, the better to secure their inaction, the pillar was made to overshadow them with a deep and preternatural darkness, so that it became almost impossible for them to advance. Meanwhile, on the side which was turned towards the Israelites, the pillar presented the appearance of a bright flame, lighting up the whole encampment, and rendering it as easy to make ready for the march as it would have been by day. Thus, the beasts were collected and laden—the columns marshalled and prepared to proceed in a certain fixed order—and everything made ready for starting so soon as the bed of the

sea should be sufficiently dry. Moses, about nightfall, descending to the water's edge, stretched forth his rod over the waves, and, an east wind at once springing up—accompanied perhaps by a strong ebb of the tide—the waters of the gulf were parted in the vicinity of the modern Suez, and a dry space left between the Bitter Lakes, which were then a prolongation of the Gulf, and the present sea-bed. The space may have been one of considerable width. The Israelites entering upon it, perhaps about midnight, accomplished the distance, which may not have exceeded a mile, with all their belongings, in the course of five or six hours, the pillar of the cloud withdrawing itself, as the last Israelites entered the sea-bed, and retiring after them like a rearguard. Thus protected, they made the transit in safety, and morning saw them encamped upon the shores of Asia.

Ver. 19.—*The angel of God.* The Divine Presence, which manifested itself in the pillar of the cloud, is called indifferently "the Lord" (ch. xiii. 21; xiv. 24), and "the Angel of God"—just as the appearance to Moses in the burning bush is termed both "God" and "the angel of the Lord" (ch. iii. 2). Which went before—i.e., "which ordinarily, and (so to speak) habitually preceded the camp" (ch. xiii. 21; Ps. lxxviii. 14). And stood behind them. Took up a fixed station for the night, or the greater portion of it.

Ver. 20.—*It was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.* Though there is nothing in the Hebrew correspondent to the expressions "to them," "to these," yet the meaning seems to have been rightly apprehended by our translators. (See the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, the Syriac version, and among moderns, Knobel, Maurer, Rosenmüller, and Kalisch.)

Ver. 21.—*Moses stretched out his hand.* As commanded by God (ver. 16). Compare the somewhat similar action of Elijah and Elisha, when they divided the Jordan (2 Kings ii. 8, 14). *The Lord caused the sea to*

go back by a strong east wind. The LXX translate "a strong south wind" (*ἐν ἀνέμῳ νότῳ βλαίῳ*); but the Hebrew *kadīm* is certainly "east" rather than "south." It is not, however, "east" in the sense of due east, but would include all the range of the compass between N.E. and S.E. If we suppose the Bitter Lakes to have been joined to the Red Sea by a narrow and shallow channel, the action of a south-east wind, by driving the water of the Lakes northward, may have easily produced the effect described in the text. A simultaneous ebb of the lower gulf would have further facilitated the passage. The waters were divided. Water remained in the upper extremity of the Gulf, now the site of the Bitter Lakes, and also, of course, below Suez. The portion of the sea dried up lay probably between the present southern extremity of the Bitter Lakes and Suez. By the gradual elevation and desiccation of the region, it has passed into permanent dry land.

Ver. 22.—*The waters were a wall—i.e., a protection, a defence.* Pharaoh could not attack them on either flank, on account of the two bodies of water between which their march lay. He could only come at them by following after them. The metaphor has been by some understood literally, especially on account of the expression in ch. xv. 8—"The floods stood upright as an heap;" and again that in Ps. lxxviii. 13—"He made the waters to stand as an heap." But those phrases, occurring in poems, must be taken as poetical; and can scarcely have any weight in determining the meaning of "wall" here. We must ask ourselves—is there not an economy and a restraint in the exertion by God even of miraculous power?—is more used than is needed for the occasion?—and would not all that was needed at this time have been effected by such a division of the sea as we have supposed, without the fluid being converted into a solid, or having otherwise the laws of its being entirely altered. Kalisch's statement, that the word "wall" here is "not intended to convey the idea of protection, but only of hardness and solidity," seems to us the very reverse of the truth. Protection is at any rate the main idea, and any other is secondary and subordinate.

HOMILETICS

Vers. 19—22.—*God protects his own, but in strange ways.*—The passage of the Red Sea was the crowning miracle by which God effected the deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt; and all its circumstances were strange and worthy of notice.

1. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, WHICH HAD BEEN WONT TO LEAD THEM, REMOVED AND WENT BEHIND THEM. They had to enter the dark and slimy bed from which the sea had retired without the cheering sight of the Divine presence before their eyes beckoning them on. So there are occasions of trial in the life of every man, when God seems to withdraw his presence, to remove himself, to "go behind us," so that we cannot see him. Sometimes he withdraws himself in grief or in anger; but more often

he does it in mercy. The temporary obscuration will advantage the soul under the circumstances. There is perhaps some secular work to be done which requires all its attention, like this passage, where every step had to be taken with care. Short separations are said to intensify affection; and the sense of the Divine presence is more valued after a withdrawal, like the sun's light after an eclipse.

II. THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD, WHICH HAD BEEN WONT TO BE ALL SMOKE, OR ALL FIRE, WAS NOW BOTH AT ONCE. "It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these." The eye sees that which it has within itself the power of seeing. To the godly the presence of God is a joy and a delight, a brightness and a radiance. To the ungodly it is an awful and alarming thing, a cloud which mars their enjoyment. When Jesus was on earth, there were those among the inhabitants of Palestine who "besought him to depart out of their coasts" (Matt. viii. 34). The ungodly fear to look upon God. He is to them dark, mysterious, terrible. The sense of his presence paralyses them—they cannot stir till it is removed. But to the godly, it is "light in the darkness"—it illuminates mind and soul and spirit—it cheers and brightens the path of life—it irradiates even the obscurest gulf that we have to traverse. Let us bear in mind that when the Divine presence is removed from before our eyes, it is still in no case far from us. If at any time we do not see God, he at all times sees us. We have only to make an effort, and we can in a short time recover our perception of his presence.

III. BY MEANS OF A STRONG EAST WIND THE WATERS WERE DIVIDED, UPON MOSES STRETCHING OUT HIS HAND OVER THE SEA. We may note here, 1. The weakness of the instrument. The rod of Moses, stretched over the sea, or towards the sea, from some vantage-point on the shore—how small a thing was this! How incapable in itself of producing any important effect! Yet in the providence of God, it was made a link in the chain of causation by which was brought about one of the greatest events in the whole course of mundane history. Must we not conclude from this, that, when God appoints means, however weak and trivial they may be in themselves, they become at once by his appointment matters of the highest consequence? Again we may note, 2. The employment of a natural agency, insufficient in itself to accomplish the end, yet having a natural tendency towards its accomplishment. God, the author of nature, uses nature as a help towards accomplishing his ends, even when the help is but small. Our Lord fed the 5000 and the 4000, by means of loaves and fishes already existing, though the material which they furnished could but have gone a short way. He anointed the blind man's eyes with spittle and clay, and bade him "go, wash in the pool of Siloam," using means which were to some extent reputed salutary, but which of themselves could never have restored sight. So with the east wind. We must not suppose that it divided the sea by its own natural force. God used it, as he used the spittle and the clay, and made it accomplish his purpose, not by its own force but by his own power. And so generally with the forces which seem to remove obstacles from the path of God's people in this life—they are potent through his agency, because he sets them to work, and works through them.

IV. THE SEA, ON WHICH PHARAOH COUNTED FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION, BECAME FIRST THEIR DEFENCE AND THEN THEIR AVENGER. "The waters were a wall unto them." But for the two bodies of water, on their right and on their left, Pharaoh's force might have outflanked the host of Israel, and fallen upon it on three sides, or even possibly have surrounded it. God can at any time turn dangers into safeguards. When persecutors threaten the Church, he can turn their swords against each other, and allow the Church to pass on its way in peace. When temptations assault the soul, he can give the soul such strength, that it conquers them and they become aids to its progress. And with equal ease can he make the peril which menaces his faithful ones fall, not upon them, but upon their adversaries. The furnace heated to consume the "three children" destroyed none but those bitter persecutors who had arrested them and cast them into the fire (Dan. iii. 22). The lions of Darius the Mede devoured, not Daniel, but "those men that had accused Daniel" (*ib.* vi. 24). The Jews, who had sought to destroy the infant Church by prejudicing the Romans against Christ (John xix. 12) and his apostles (Acts xxiv. 1—9), were themselves within forty years of Christ's death, conquered and almost exterminated by these same Romans. The ungodly are ever "falling into their own nets together," while the godly *man* for whom the nets are set "escapes them."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Light to the friend, darkness to the foe.* We are told that as the Israelites were about to cross the Red Sea, the fiery-cloudy pillar changed its position, and came between them and the Egyptians. It was the self-same pillar, but it wore a very different aspect to friends and foes respectively. "It was," we read, "a cloud of darkness to them (the Egyptians), but it gave light to these (the camp of Israel)." We should notice that the same double aspect belongs to all God's manifestations of himself, in Law and Gospel, in matter and spirit, in the world, and in the Church.

I. GOD'S ATTRIBUTES have this double aspect. Not one of his attributes but has a bright side turned to the believer, and a dark side to the wicked. This is true even of such attributes as holiness and justice, from which the believer, as a sinner, might seem to have most to fear. "*Faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). So God's omnipotence, which is hostile to the transgressor, is pledged to defend, bless, and save the saint (1 Pet. i. 5; Jude 24). God's eternity, in like manner, is given to the believer for a dwelling-place (Deut. xxxiii. 27; Ps. xc. 1), but how terrible an aspect it has to the evil-doer! The dark side of love is wrath. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). But on the other hand, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31).

II. GOD'S LAWS have this double aspect. 1. *Physical* laws. The constitution of nature is favourable to virtue, hostile to vice (See Butler's *Analogy*). 2. *Moral* law, for this, while awarding life to the obedient, is a ministry of condemnation to the sinner. 3. *Mental and spiritual* laws. Take e.g. the law of habit. "The law of habit, which applies alike to all our physical, mental, and moral actions, must be regarded in its design as a truly benevolent one. But the law of habit, when the soul yields to sin, works death to the sinner:—like the pillar of cloud which made day to Israel, and was darkness to the Egyptians, so the law, which is bright to the well-doer, sheds night upon the path of the sinner, until he is plunged into the sea of death" (Theodore D. Woolsey).

III. GOD'S WORD has this double aspect. To the prayerful, believing, docile mind, it is a source of unfailing light. It is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path (Ps. cxix. 105.). But to the proud, the unbelieving, and the presumptuous, it is only darkness. These can see nothing in it but difficulties, incredibilities, contradictions, moral monstrosities. It is full of stumbling-blocks. The more they read it, the more are they blinded by it. They read only to discover some new fault or error.

IV. GOD'S VERY GOSPEL has this double aspect. "The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18—24). It repels the one class, and attracts the other. To the one, it is a savour of life; to the other, a savour of death (2 Cor. ii. 16).—J. O.

Vers. 19—31.—*The goodness and severity of God.* I. WHAT GOD IS TO HIS OWN IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE. 1. He comes between them and their foes. God's presence is between us and our enemies, and they can do no more against us than his love permits. 2. He is light to them in the time of peril. 3. The waters are divided before them. However much our way may seem hedged in, God's arm will open up a path for us. 4. The way was not only a path of escape, but one of perfect safety; the waters were a wall to them upon the right hand and the left.

II. WHAT GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE'S FOES. 1. Their path is wrapped in darkness. They cannot lay hold of the weakest of those who but a moment before seemed wholly in their power. They are perplexed and baffled. 2. Daring to follow they are filled with horror by the revelation that their contest is with the mighty God: they are face to face not with the servant, but the master. 3. Their progress is arrested (25). 4. They in vain attempt to flee. Men may flee to God; they cannot flee from God. 5. They are overwhelmed with destruction.

III. THE RESULT OF THE CONFLICT (31). 1. The people are filled with holy awe. "They feared Jehovah. God's judgments deepen in his people's hearts the sense of his terribleness and majesty." 2. It strengthened their faith; they believed the Lord. 3.

It produced a spirit of obedience: they "believed his servant Moses." They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The outcome of fear and trust must be full obedience to him who leads us into the promised rest—the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.—U.

Ver. 22.—*We walk by faith, not by sight.* The great mistake of most people is, that they trust too much to their own eyes. They will not take into consideration anything that lies beyond the field of sensible experiences. Now God and his eternity, though manifested in this field, are practically outside it; the spiritual eyesight is more reliable than the physical, because that which it sees is safer to rely upon. Natural sight shows us obstacles, spiritual sight shows us how they may be surmounted. Try to walk by the one and you must stand still; try to walk by the other and nothing can long keep you standing. Notice here:—

I. FAITH'S SECRET. The story illustrates this; it shows us:—1. *What the Israelites saw.* Their position looked bad enough. Behind were the hosts of Pharaoh; before, the sea. They were shut in. Trusting only to their eyes they could hardly do other than despair (xiv. 10—13). Better to have been "let alone" in Egypt, than thus delivered, to be destroyed in the wilderness. A clear head, if the heart be faint, is not much help to any man. 2. *What Moses saw.* He was in the same position as the people whom he led, yet he could see more than they did. He looked not merely before and behind, he looked also up to God. Faith enabled him to ignore sight, and inspired him to encourage his sight-fascinated followers. Soon the word came which justified his faith, obstacles were nothing, let them wait the word of command and then "go forward." Often difficulties seem to surround us—no way of escape anywhere visible. Even so faith can sight the way, for faith can sight God who sees it. Stand still, wait his word; refuse to allow that for those who trust him any difficulties can be insurmountable. Faith would not be of much good were there no obstacles to test it. Faith is not of much good if it cannot learn to ignore obstacles.

II. FAITH'S SUCCESS. The path of faith not merely leads out of danger, it turns dangers into safeguards and transforms them into a protection for those who tread it. When the word came "Go forward," the waters no longer "shut in" the Israelites; instead:—1. They protected them during their passage. The Egyptians could but follow, they could not circumvent. "The waters were a wall unto them" on either side; no wall could have been more impregnable. 2. They secured them against the fury of their pursuers. Israel once across, the waters returned, overwhelming the armies of the enemy. So too faith, facing the flood, found that waters which drowned the world upheld the ark and floated it in safety. So too faith, facing the waters of death, finds that though they overwhelm the unready they float the faithful into a safe harbour. So too with all difficulties, faced in faith, they are our best helpers. "The hand of the diligent" not only "maketh rich," it cleaves a way for him through the sea of difficulty, and leaves his pursuers, sloth, ignorance, all the deadly sins, overwhelmed and swallowed up behind him.

III. FAITH'S STRENGTH. How comes faith to do all this? It is not faith that does it, but the God in whom faith trusts. Nothing is impossible to faith, because nothing is impossible to God. The Egyptians are sure of their prey; the Israelites are sure of destruction; because, whilst reckoning with what sight sees, they fail to reckon with the unseen God. Moses is sure of safety because he is sure of God, and knows that *he* is more than a match for all the seeming tyranny of circumstances.

Application. How many people are shut in, faithless and discouraged before some sea of difficulty! "I cannot do this," "I cannot do that," and yet no progress is possible until I not merely *can* but *do*. "O ye of little faith, wherefore will ye doubt!" "I cannot;" no, but *God* can; and what he bids you do that he will strengthen you to do. Don't stand facing the difficulties, but face the God who is above them and beyond them. "Stand still and wait" until the word comes, but when the word does come, "Go forward" (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).—G.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 23—31. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EGYPTIANS. As the rearguard of the Israelite host having entered the tract from which the waters had retired, proceeded along it, and left the western end of the isthmus vacant, the pillar of the cloud seems to have followed it up and withdrawn with it. The Egyptians immediately advanced. Notwithstanding the preternatural darkness, they had become aware, perhaps by means of their ears, of the movement that was taking place, and with early dawn they were under arms and pressing on the line of the Israelite retreat. They found the channel still dry, and hastily entering it with their chariot force, they hurried forward in pursuit. The first check which they received was wholly supernatural. "The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (ver. 24). Details here are wanting; but less cannot be meant, than that some strange phenomena connected with the retiring "pillar" caused a panic and threw the ranks of the army into confusion. Then followed natural impediments. The Lord "took off," or "clogged" their chariot wheels, and made them go heavily—i.e., the chariot wheels, not by miracle, but by the operation of God's natural laws, sank into the soft sand over which the Israelites had passed easily, having no wheeled vehicles, and the chariots were consequently dragged forward slowly and with difficulty. The double hindrance, from the confusion and the stoppage of the chariots, so discouraged the Egyptians, that after a time they resolved on beating a retreat (ver. 25). They had set out on their return, when Moses, at God's instance, stretched forth his hand once more over the sea, and the waters on both sides began at once to return. The Egyptians saw their danger, and "fled against" the advancing tide, racing against it, as it were, and seeking to reach the shore. But in vain. The waves came on rapidly, and (in the language of ver. 28) there was not a man of all those who had entered the dry bed of the sea that was not overwhelmed and drowned in the waters. We should be wrong to press this language to the extreme letter. In graphic narrative the sacred writers uniformly employ universal

expressions, where they mean to give the general fact or general result. The true meaning is, that the pursuit altogether failed. Not an Egyptian made his way alive across the strait. All that the Israelites ever saw afterwards of the army that they had so much dreaded (ver. 10) was a ghastly mass of corpses thrown up by the tide on the Asiatic shore (ver. 30).

Ver. 23. — All Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. Here, as elsewhere, the word translated "horsemen" probably means the men who rode in the chariots. Observe that the Pharaoh himself is not said to have gone in. Meuephthah was apt to avoid placing himself in a position of danger (*Records of the Past*, vol. iv. pp. 44, 45). Nor is any of the infantry said to have entered the bed of the sea.

Ver. 24. — In the morning watch. The "morning watch" of the Hebrews at this period of their history lasted from 2 a.m. to sunrise. Sunrise in Egypt, early in April, would take place about a quarter to six. The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians. The description in Ps. lxxvii. 17, 18, is generally regarded as belonging to this point in the narrative of the Exodus, and may be considered as the traditional exposition of it. "The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad the voice of thy thunder was in the heavens the lightning lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook." As Josephus says—"Showers of rain came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire; thunderbolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything, wont to be sent by God upon men as indications of his wrath, which did not happen upon this occasion" (*Ant. Jud.* ii. 16, § 3). And troubled the host. Or "disturbed the host," i.e., "threw it into confusion" (*συμπετάσει*, LXX.).

Ver. 25. — And took off their chariot wheels. The Sept. has "clogged the axles of their chariots;" but this is from a reading not at present found in the Hebrew MSS. Most modern commentators, however, prefer the reading, which gives a good sense; whereas the existing text is unintelligible. As Kalisch observes, "if the wheels of the chariots had been broken off, the chariots would not have moved at all." That they drove them heavily. The marginal rendering, "and made them go heavily," is preferable. The wheels no doubt sank into the sand up to the axles, and were with difficulty extricated, again to sink a few yards further on. Progress was

thus greatly retarded. So that the Egyptians said, "Let us flee." Literally, "And Egypt said, 'I will flee.'" The Lord fighteth for them. Compare the promise of Moses (ver. 14). The Egyptians were convinced, by the various obstacles which they encountered, that Jehovah was lending his people active aid, and miraculously obstructing their advance. If this were so, it was of no use to persevere, and accordingly they began their retreat.

Vers. 26, 27.—And the Lord said. God here interposed a new difficulty. Moses was instructed to stretch out his rod once more, and undo his former work. At the appointed sign, the east wind ceased to blow, and the waters of the Bitter Lakes, no longer driven to the north-west by its force, flowed back with something of a reflux, while at the same time, the tide having turned, the Red Sea waves came rushing on at unwonted speed. In vain the Egyptians fled. They were met by the advancing floods, which poured in on either side, overwhelming and covering up all those who had entered on the dangerous path.

Ver. 28.—The chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh. Rather "The chariots, and the chariot men of all the host of Pharaoh." So Knobel correctly. Kalisch thinks—"We are not permitted to suppose that only the Egyptian chariots pursued the Israelites into the sea, while the infantry remained behind, so that the former alone were devoured by the waves." But even he admits that "both in this and in the following chapter, and in most other parts generally, the destruction of the chariots (chariot force?) and its warriors is chiefly alluded to, so that this particular stress would perhaps justify that conclusion." What is clear is, that no force but the chariot force is said to have entered the bed of the sea in pursuit of Israel. There remained not so much as one of them. On the proper understanding of this statement, see the introductory paragraph to the chapter.

Ver. 29.—Walked. Rather, "had walked." The waters were a wall. Rather, "had been a wall." For the meaning of the expression, see note on ver. 22.

Ver. 30.—Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. Josephus says (*Ant. Jud.* ii. 16, § 6), that, after the passage of the sea by the Israelites, a west wind set in, which (assisted by the current) drove the bodies of the drowned Egyptians to the eastern side of the gulf, where many of them were cast up upon the shore. In this way Moses, according to him, obtained weapons and armour for a considerable number of Israelites.

Ver. 31.—And Israel saw that great work. The "work" was, at the least, (1) the (almost) entire destruction of that arm of the service—the chariot force—on which the Egyptian kings mainly relied for success in all their

Wars; and (2) the defeat and disgrace of the Egyptian king himself, in an expedition for which he was alone responsible, involving permanent discredit to his military capacity, and naturally tending to shake his authority over his subjects. It secured the Israelites from further persecution, mainly by the reminiscences which it left behind, but partly also by removing them to a distance from the natural course of Egyptian warlike or commercial movement. Though Egypt had mining establishments in the Sinaitic peninsula, at Wady-Magharah and Sarabit-el-Khadim, yet as these were avoided by the Israelites on their way to Sinai, and never afterwards approached, there naturally was no collision between them and the Pharaonic garrisons at those sites. Still more remote were they during their wanderings from the Egyptian military route, which proceeded along the coast from Pelusium to Gaza, and then ran northwards through the Shephelah. Thus the Passage of the Red Sea brought one phase in the life of the people to an end, and was the commencement of another. It separated them from Egypt until the time came when their king would hold communication with its monarch on equal terms (1 Kings iii. 1). It secured their independence, and raised them at once into a nation. It further caused them to exchange the artificial life of a bureaucratic and convention-loving community for the open space and untrammelled freedom of the desert. It thus rejuvenated and reinvigorated the race, and enabled them to enter on that career of conquest which culminated in the Kingdom—may we not say the Empire?—of David. Some writers have supposed that the blow to the Egyptian power was greater than here represented. They believe the entire warrior caste or class to have taken part in the expedition, and to have been destroyed in the Red Sea. Thus they describe the calamity as "the total annihilation of the whole military force of the Egyptians" (Kalisch). They also believe the Pharaoh to have perished with his host. To the present writer it seems that the former opinion is contrary both to the text of Scripture, and to the after course of Egyptian history, for it is agreed on all hands that Egypt continued nearly as powerful as before, while the latter he regards as at least exceedingly doubtful. Ps. lxxxvi. 15, is quoted as asserting it; but it appears to him (1) that "overthrow" is not necessarily "death;" and (2) that "Pharaoh and his host" may be put for "Pharaoh's host" by *hendiadys*. The absence of any prophecy that God would take the Pharaoh's life, and the entire silence of Moses on the subject in chs. xiv. and xv. seems to be scarcely explicable on any other theory than that he escaped, not having accompanied his chariot force in its rash pursuit of the Israelites.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 23—30.—*God's dealings with the wicked and impenitent.* If the passage of Israel through the Red Sea shows conspicuously God's protection of his people in the time of trouble, the overthrow of the Egyptians indicates, at least as conspicuously, his execution of wrath upon the wicked.

I. **FIRST OF ALL, IT IS NOTICEABLE HOW HIS EYE UPON THEIR HEARTS, LOOKING INTO THEM THROUGH THE CLOUD AND DARKNESS WHEREIN THEY ARE ENVELOPED, TROUBLES THEM.** Bad men cannot bear God's eye upon their hearts. It sees through all veils, penetrates all disguises, detects all subterfuges. The bad man is a riddle, even to himself, and would feign continue an enigma, impenetrable, mysterious. But the searching eye of God turned full upon him, so illuminates every dark corner and unexplored cranny of his nature, that all becomes only too patent and clear. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Under that steadfast gaze the mystery melts away, like a summer fog, and the bad man sees himself revealed, without disguise as a very ordinary and commonplace offender.

II. **IT IS WORTHY OF OBSERVATION THAT HE OFTEN CLOGS THEIR CHARIOT WHEELS, AND MAKES THEM TO GO HEAVILY.** The enterprises which the wicked undertake are continually interfered with. God will not let them have the success which their framers anticipate, and which for their cleverness and ingenuity they may be said to deserve. He "clogs the wheels" of their various designs, and makes them drag heavily. One miscarriage follows another. This enterprise will not advance at all; that, by dint of great exertion, moves but slowly. It is as though the chariot wheels sank into quicksands. It is not often that they wake up to the conviction that "the Lord fighteth against the Egyptians;" though this may happen sometimes. Then perhaps they repent them of their vain attempt, and would feign retreat from it. But it is **TOO LATE.**

III. **IT IS MOST NOTICEABLE HOW AT LAST GOD'S JUDGMENTS COME IN WITH AN OVERWHELMING FLOOD, WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPING.** "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Upon the ungodly God at the last rains down "snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest—this is their portion to drink." "Sudden destruction comes upon them unawares." Now it is in financial ruin, now in utter failure of health, now in complete prostration of the spirit, and an intolerable sense of remorse and despair that the judgment descends—blow follows blow, failure succeeds to failure, all the old refuges and supports prove unavailing—angry floods pour in on every side—there is no reaching the shore—all is tossing surf, slippery rock, and entangling seaweed—not a hand is stretched out to save. So they go down to the pit—the devouring waves swallow them up—the water-floods go up over their heads—they disappear, and their place knows them no more. The wages of sin is death; and the end of sin is death. The ultimate end of impenitent sin is eternal death. Let men, *while there is time*, turn away from sin, give up their wicked enterprises, retrace their steps—taking warning from the awful Red Sea calamity, and the terrible destruction there wrought.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 23—31.—*The overthrow of the Egyptians.* "The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea," etc. On this observe:—

I. **THE INFATUATION OF THE PURSUERS (ver. 23).** We do not speak of the lessons they had *already* received as to the folly of contending with Jehovah. The plagues were past. The memory of them had been cast behind their backs. What we do wonder at is, that when the Egyptians reached the shore, and saw there what they *did* see, they were not deterred from proceeding further. What did they see? 1. *They saw the sea divided.* They could hardly mistake this for a merely natural phenomenon. The place where the Israelites crossed may have been, under special conditions, and to a limited extent, fordable. But it is safe to say that the division now effected was one the like of which had never been heard of before, and such as, occurring at this particular juncture, ought to have convinced the Egyptians that it was a result of God's special Providence, and intended for the protection of the Israelites. Special interpositions, on behalf of the Church, ought to arrest the attention of her enemies. 2. *They saw the*

cloud that went with Israel move to the rear, obviously with the design of intercepting their pursuit (vers. 19, 20). This, with the ominous darkness which enveloped them, was a second circumstance which ought to have warned them that Jehovah was fighting for his people. 3. *There was the danger, which could not but present itself to them, of being overwhelmed by the returning sea.* In whatever way the division of the waters was conceived of, whether as a natural phenomenon, or as a fact of supernatural origin, it was plainly a perilous experiment to attempt the pursuit. Viewing it as the result of an ebb-tide, aided by a strong east wind, there was the risk of being caught by the returning tide; or if the wind abated, or changed its direction, of being immediately submerged. In the other case there was the danger, almost the certainty, of the supernatural power which restrained the waters permitting them to flow back on the pursuers. What infatuation, then, possessed the Egyptians, prompting them to enter the sea? (1) *A false sense of honour.* Having engaged in the pursuit, it would be deemed a point of honour not to desist from it, so long as the faintest chance of success remained. They had gone too far to retreat now at the water's edge. (2) *Rage.* Fury and disappointment would possess them, as, in the very hour of their fancied triumph, they saw their prey thus elude them. Was Pharaoh and his mighty host to be thus mocked and set at nought—thus suddenly reined up and baffled? What would Egypt think of her warriors, if, setting out on such an expedition, they returned humiliated and empty-handed? At all hazards Israel must be pursued. (3) There was the *chance* of getting through. The distance was short; the way lay open; if Israel had got across, so might the Egyptians. On this chance, in the spirit of the gambler, they would stake everything. What havoc have these same motives—a false sense of honour (cf. Matt. xiv. 9), a spirit of uncalculating rage, the headstrong *gambling* disposition,—played in the history of the world! Together, or apart, they account for much of its infatuation. See specially in this conduct of Pharaoh, a picture of the infatuation to which the enemies of Christ's Church have so frequently been given over, and which will linger among them till the end. Compare e.g. the Apocalyptic gathering of the antichristian powers, to do battle with the Lamb (Rev. xvi. 14—17; xix. 11—21).

II. THE RECEPTION WHICH THEY RECEIVED FROM GOD. 1. In "the morning watch," and when the Egyptians were in "the midst of the sea," *God looked forth upon them from the pillar of cloud* (ver. 23). The expression is a pregnant one. The look was a "fire-look"—some fire-appearance of a startling kind which issued from the cloud, and shed terror over the pursuers. It was accompanied with thunderings and lightnings (Ps. lxxvii. 18, 19). God's looks are potent. When God "looked" on Israel (ch. ii. 25), it meant that he was about to bring salvation to them. When he "looked" on the Egyptians, it was the prelude to their destruction. Through that pillar glares forth an eye which sends a separate dismay into each Egyptian heart and all is felt to be lost. We find two imitations of this in modern poetry—one by Coleridge, in his 'Ode on the Departing Year,' where he prays God to—

"Open his eye of fire from some uncertain cloud,"

and another (by Southey) in the 'Curse of Kehama,' where, after the 'Man Almighty,' holding his Amreeta Cup, had exclaimed—

"Now, Seeva, look to thine abode!"

It is added, when the cup is drunk—

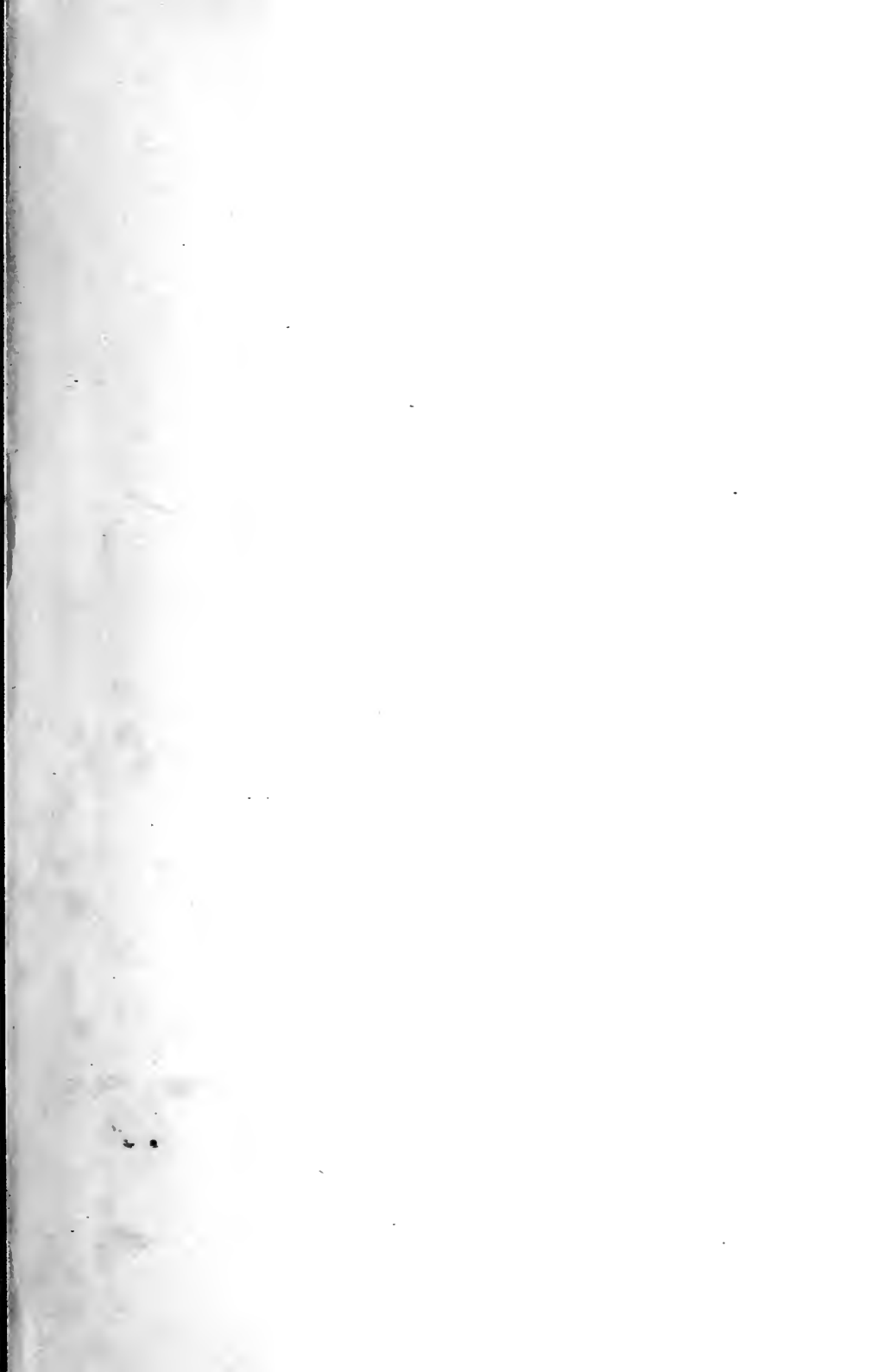
"Then Seeva open'd on the accursed one
His eye of anger—upon him alone
The wrath beam fell. He shudders, but too late." (Gilfillan.)

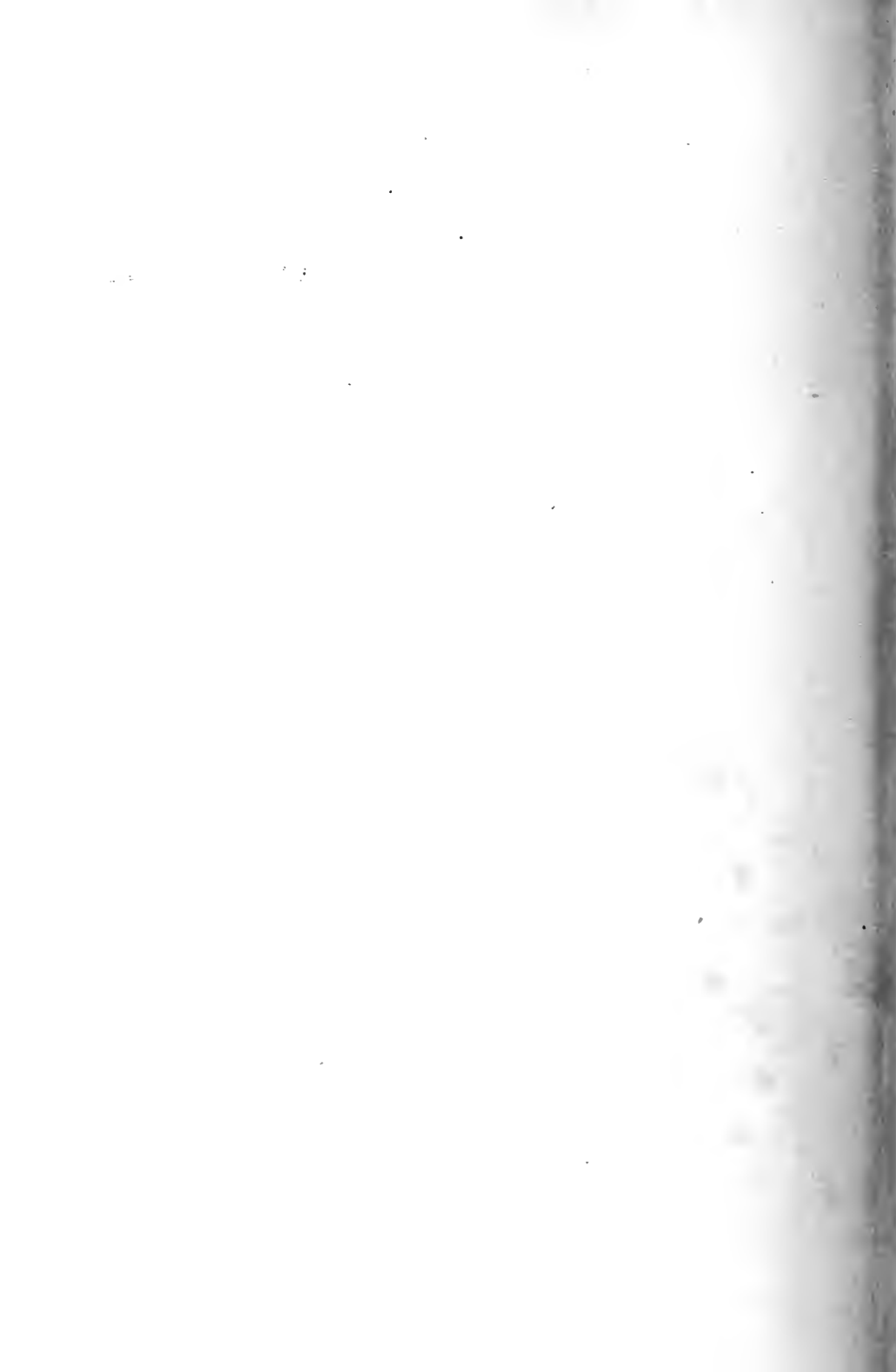
2. *God troubled their hosts* (vers. 24, 25). There is meant by this some supernatural exertion of power. It was not due to natural causes alone that the chariot wheels were "taken off," and that they drave heavily. It was God who, by his heavy hand upon them, was thus obstructing their progress. The invisible powers were fighting against the Egyptians, as "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Jud. v. 20).

Those are sure to drive heavily, who drive in the face of God's inhibition, and under his ban. 3. *God brought the sea back upon them* (ver. 26). Swiftly, fatally, at the stretching forth of Moses' rod, the sea returned in its strength, and utterly overwhelmed them. And such, in its main outline, is the reception which Jehovah must give to all his enemies. His wrath already rests upon them. His fiery look will one day scare them. Even now they are troubled and impeded by it, and by the resistance which he opposes to their plans. Finally, he will overwhelm them in the sea of his wrath. He will visit them with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (1 Thess. i. 9). Hence—

III. THEIR COMPLETE DESTRUCTION (vers. 27, 28). They perished suddenly, miserably, and all together. Type of the overthrow of God's enemies in the end (2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xvi. 16, 17; xix. 17-21; xx. 9). The blow was a crushing one to Egypt. It filled up the measure of her punishment for the evil she had done to Israel. After the death of the first-born, there could remain nothing to Pharaoh and his servants, in the event of their still hardening themselves, but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation" (Heb. x. 27). Does some one say, what a waste of human life—how unlike a God of mercy! Rather, surely, how striking a testimony to the reality of retribution—how sure a token of the righteous doom which in the end will infallibly overtake every obdurate transgressor! God will not permit sinners always to defy him. His wrath and power are resistless. The "ungodly and sinner" must expect to feel the weight of them (1 Pet. 17, 18).

IV. RESULT (vers. 30, 31). 1. Israel was saved. 2. The Egyptian dead were found strewn upon the shore. This—(1) A memorial of God's vengeance. (2) An awful satire on so-called human greatness. (3) A pledge of security to Israel. 3. The people were filled with gratitude and fear. They "believed the Lord." The wonder is that after so marvellous a deliverance they could ever again doubt him.—J. O





Maurice J. E. E. E.

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